

Crossed Sabers

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Photo by Spc. Ruth McClary, 30th HBCT PAO, MND-B

Story by Spc. Ruth McClary
30th HBCT PAO, MND-B

BAGHDAD – At first glance she looked like a healthy baby girl, but to Noor Hassam Oudah, known as “Baby Nourah”, a glimpse was non-existent until U.S. Soldiers, family members and friends removed all obstacles to give her the chance for a glance at life.

Soldiers of Troop C, 150th Armored Reconnaissance Squadron, 30th Heavy Brigade Combat Team, were invited to a small celebration, Dec. 9, hosted by Baby Nourah's family in appreciation for setting up and covering expenses for the baby's eye surgery, Nov. 15; three days after her first birthday.

The one-year-old was born blind with congenital cataracts. The condition is reversible with surgery, but out-of-reach

First Lt. Jason Hickman, of Greenville, W. Va., proudly holds Noor Hassam Oudah, during a celebration in her honor, Dec. 9. The one-year-old known as “Baby Nourah”, was born blind as a result of congenital cataracts.

to a family living in Baghdad. The city's hospitals lack the facilities and physicians to perform the procedure.

“I was very pleased to be able to do something for this family,” said platoon leader, 1st Lt. Jason Hickman. “They have been very hospitable. It has truly been a pleasure to be able to help Nourah. I was relieved and very pleased that everything fell into place considering all the obstacles that we faced.”

For Hickman, it seems as if things fell into place right from the start. He said that if there were ever a more perfect example of divine intervention, it happened on a dark road about five months ago when a convoy made a wrong turn and ended up in Zwaynat, a small village southwest of Baghdad.

Baby Nourah was there visiting with her uncle, Muhameed Gharbi Sultan, who spoke with Hickman; informing him of the baby's plight for sight.

“So there we were at a place we hadn't intended on being,” said Hickman. “Wrong turn, perhaps, but that's not how I see it. My interest and contacts with the Order of Saint John, the wrong turn, her being there with her uncle instead of with her parents in Baghdad, no, not a coincidence.”

According to their website, the Order of St. John is a major international charity, accredited to the United Nations, whose organizations provide first aid, health care and support services in over 40 countries around the world. The Order's charitable

See ~ **Sight** Pg. 3

Students thank ISF, and U.S. forces

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Shoot ... Move ... Communicate!

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Prayers from Baghdad

By Chap. (Lt. Col.) Barb Sherer, MND-B Chaplain

As a chaplain, it has been my privilege to pray for many commanders. That has always been one of the most fulfilling parts of my job. The challenge for this edition of the Prayers from Baghdad is in trying to discern what their prayers would be, if left to their own devices. I have known so many commanders, many leadership styles and personalities, that one prayer would not fit them all. But for a few of them, the prayer might sound like this:

Prayer of the Commander

*It's Christmas somewhere, Lord
But the enemy doesn't take a holiday.
Here I am,
Patrolling the streets of Baghdad,*

*Hoping to see your Nativity Star
Shining down through the city haze.
I guess I'll take a knee for a moment,
And give you a commanders SITREP.*

*Mission was good tonight ...
Cordon and knock,
Captured some targets,
Patrols all returning safely to the JSS.
I have many brave warriors here.
They make me very proud,
And I pray I have done right by them.
So many decisions ...
[Decisions that affect their lives]
Weigh heavily on my mind.
Sometimes I wonder,
Did I do the right thing?*

*But I asked for this burden, Lord,
So no grousing from this Joe.
Instead,
I thank you for the chance to lead,
To be in charge.
I thank you ...
For NCOs who are not afraid to speak
Their minds,
Then execute with ferocity,
once I make a decision*

*I thank you ...
For the hard missions,
The ones that test my body,
My endurance,
my will.*

*But I need your help, Lord,
When enduring a KLE
Not to feel total frustration
At hearing the same thing
Over and over and over ... !*

*And finally,
As I strap on that 80 pounds
Of lightweight gear
To hunt and fight the enemy,
Grant me the courage
To trust my Iraqi partners,
And let them never doubt that I will be
With them,
In the mud, and the rain, and the heat.*

*Let ME never forget that you are
By my side.
In fact,
Could you stand watch for a few minutes,
While I curl up in my poncho liner?
Just wake me if you need me,
Or if you hear any sleigh bells.*

*Goodnight, Lord,
Merry Christmas.*

Amen



Questions, comments, story ideas? Contact the Crossed Sabers at nicholas.conner@mnd-b.army.mil. The Crossed Sabers is an authorized publication for members of the U.S. Army. Contents of the Crossed Sabers are not necessarily official views of, or endorsed by, the U.S. Government, Department of Defense, Department of the Army or the 1st Cavalry Division. All editorial content of the Crossed Sabers is prepared, edited, provided and approved by the 1st Cavalry Division Public Affairs Office.

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Sight~ From Pg. 1

work is carried out by the St. John Eye Hospital in Jerusalem. The Order of St. John traces its origins back 900 years to the Knights Hospitaller from whom St. John today derives its inspiration and maxims – Pro Fide Pro Utilitate Hominum, ‘For the Faith and in the Service of Humanity.’

“I don’t believe in the traditional sense of the word destiny, but I do believe that God puts people in certain places at certain times,” said Hickman. “Things don’t happen solely by coincidence. All you have to do is look for the road signs.”

“The signs were clear, so I sent some emails and that’s how we arrived here,” he said.

Once Nourah was diagnosed, Hickman emailed St. John’s Jerusalem Eye Hospital, the main provider of eye care in the West Bank, Gaza and East Jerusalem, and a cause he has contributed to in the past.

Through contact with Ruth Ann Skaff,

the U.S. Executive Director of the Priory of St. John’s, Hickman was referred to Dr. Mehyar, of the al-Khalidi Medical Center in Amman, Jordan, where the procedure was performed.

They created a plan for Nourah and Hickman emailed his family and asked for donations from Soldiers of the brigade. Family and friends from his hometown of Greenville, W. Va.; Belmont, W. Va., where he grew up; and St. Marys, W. Va., were the main contributors of the \$5,000 needed to help Nourah.

From that point on he was determined to help her, even in his darkest hour Hickman thought of Nourah.

“Lieutenant Hickman’s father passed away as we were working out all the details for Nourah,” said Staff Sgt. Travers Brake, of Elkins, W. Va., who took over the campaign while Hickman was on emergency leave. “He asked for the guys in the platoon to give donations to Nourah

in lieu of sending flowers. Now that’s special.”

Many emails and meetings later led to the celebration where Hickman, who didn’t get a good look at Nourah that first night, finally was able to hold the baby he introduced to the brigade and a lot of caring people back in West Virginia.

Dressed in a plush pink puppy dog snow suit, accessorizing a yellow and pink hat and little yellow rimmed glasses, baby Nourah made her rounds at the celebration; oblivious to her stardom. She looked around, waved and stared at some of the people instrumental in giving her such a special gift.

Nourah’s paternal grandfather, Oudah Ghardi Sultan al-Jubori, said she has to go back for a check-up in a month and she has to wear glasses for five years; a small sacrifice for a lifetime of imagery.

“We are very grateful to you,” said al Jubori. “At one time [Iraqi’s and U.S. Sol-

diers] could not sit and talk like this [without wearing armored vest and helmets], now we are very close. You should visit more. Please come back and visit before you go back to the states.”

Hickman, Brake and the elders of Nourah’s family shared a traditional Iraqi meal together, drank chai tea and talked late into the evening; laughing and joking.

Since the operation, family members said she crawls, grabs for things and follows hands, fingers and objects that are placed in front of her. With her big pouty cheeks and little cherry lips, she quietly absorbs her surroundings and responds at will.

“The Lord may not push you around the board like a pawn, but every now and again he puts you where he wants you,” said Hickman. “We were supposed to end up in Zwaynat that night, it was just up to us what we were going to do when we got there.” ✂

WWE superstars express awe of troops at Camp Taji

Story by Sgt. Alun Thomas

1st ACB, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs

CAMP TAJI, Iraq – Professional wrestlers from World Wrestling Entertainment are used to being cheered by thousands of fans, night after night, during their grueling schedules every year in arenas throughout the world.

Seven WWE superstars found themselves receiving the same cheers from the 1st Air Cavalry Brigade, Dec. 2, when they visited Soldiers, here, as part of a WWE Morale, Welfare and Recreation tour, which comes to deployed areas every year since 2003.

The wrestlers, including Mike ‘The Miz’ Mizanin, Fit Finlay and Mark Henry, signed autographs and posed for photos with 1st ACB Soldiers at the Forward Arming and Refueling Point and the 615th Aviation Support Battalion maintenance hangar to an enthusiastic response.

Mizanin said the tour is his second trip to Iraq, but still an eye opener.

“It’s funny because you always see news clips about what’s going on out here, so you have an idea ... but you don’t really know until you’re actually here,” Mizanin said.

Mizanin, the current WWE United States Heavyweight Champion, said he didn’t realize how monotonous a deployment can be.

“Morale can get so low here because there isn’t much to do except sleep, work, eat and work out,” Mizanin said. “That helps give me a new appreciation of what Soldiers go through and all the hard work they do.”

Mizanin said he talked to several Soldiers who had been in perilous situations on previous deployments, something that left him in awe.

“I can’t imagine that ... being blown up fighting for our country, for us. It gave me a whole new appreciation for [the Soldiers],” Mizanin said.

Mizanin said he was appreciative of the response from the 1st ACB and all the Soldiers they met during their visit.

“The troops are always one of the loudest crowds that we have, so it’s always a great time,” Mizanin said. “It’s been awesome being here... ”

WWE women’s competitor Layla said it was amazing to be in Iraq for the first time.

“It’s surreal to even think that I’m out here in Iraq,” Layla said. “It’s very touching and soothing to the heart and lifts my spirits.”

“It reminds me we’re very fortunate and blessed to be able to go back home and be in our beds and be comfortable and safe,” she continued. “Just this brief glimpse of what [Soldiers] go through is pretty scary and I have a lot of respect for everyone here.”

Layla said the WWE never forgets the military, which is why they come back to Iraq every year.

“We do remember what [Soldiers] do and even though we’re far away this is our way of saying thanks to everyone out here,” Layla added.

Layla also had the opportunity to sit in an AH-64D Apache attack helicopter, which she said was a nerve wracking experience.

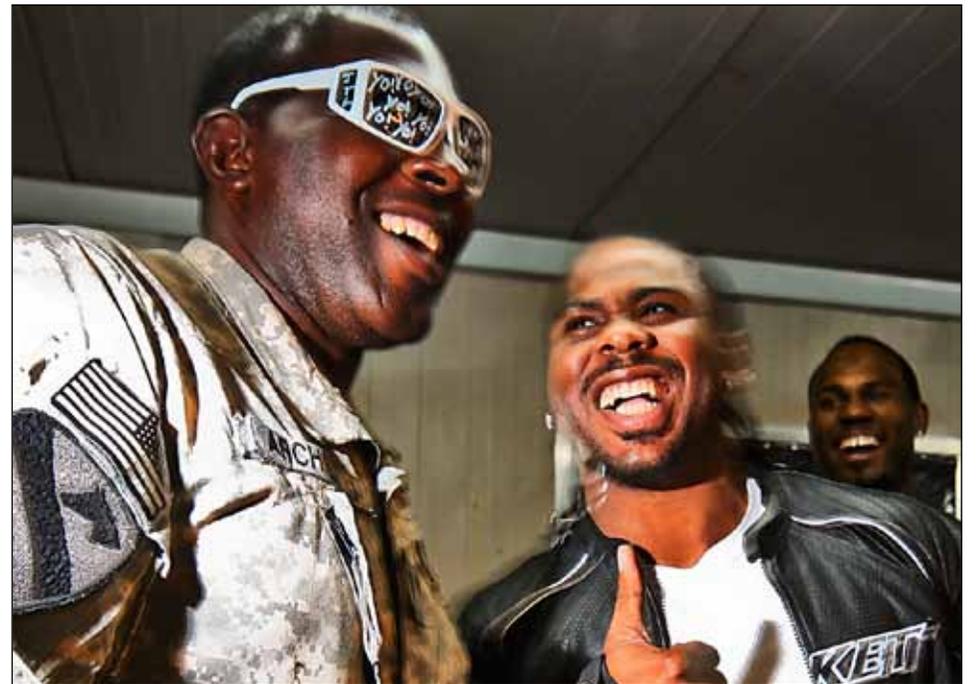
“It feels like a toy, and looking at all the buttons, I wanted to touch them ... but if I did, something bad would probably happen,” Layla said. “I got a lesson from a couple of [Apache] instructors and it was very, very impressive. It was definitely the first time I’ve seen anything like it.”

Meeting the wrestlers was a thrill for Spc. Marcus Archibald, from San Antonio, a fueller for Company A, 615th ASB, who said being a major WWE fan made it a memorable occasion for him.

“I’ve seen them on TV and been to live events before, but never sat down and shook hands with one of them in person,” Archibald said.

Telling his sister back home about the WWE visit was something Archibald was anxious to do.

“I want to send my autographs to her and tell her ‘this is who I met and who I shook hands with,’” he said. ✂



Photos by Sgt. Travis Zielinski, 1st ACB, 1st Cav. Div. PAO

Above, Professional wrestler JTG (right) gives a thumbs up after placing his sunglasses on Spc. Marcus Archibald, a fueller in Company A, 615th ASB. Archibald was amused that he was taller than some of the performers, as they are shorter in person than they appear on TV.



Photos by Sgt. Travis Zielinski, 1st ACB, 1st Cav. Div. PAO

Above, World Wrestling Entertainment superstars Mike ‘The Miz’ Mizanin (left) and JTG (center), sign autographs and shake hands with Soldiers from the 615th Aviation Support Battalion.

U.S., FP forces meet, conduct joint search

Story by Spc. Daniel Schneider

MND-B PAO

BAGHDAD – As the sun set, Dec. 2, at Forward Operating Base Falcon, Soldiers prepared to conduct a meeting with Iraqi Federal Police, which eventually evolved into a search for a weapons cache in Baghdad's Rashid district.

The mission of U.S. troops with the 252nd Combined Arms Battalion, 30th Heavy Brigade Combat Team was to meet with lieutenants of the Iraqi FP and to support the police in dismounted and mounted patrols, said Sgt. Dustin Butcher, a team leader from Wilson, N.C.

However, after talking with the lieutenants, the Americans altered their plan and decided to adjust their route.

U.S. forces are taking a backseat approach, allowing Iraqi forces to take the lead on missions. The Iraqi police share intelligence with U.S. forces about suspicious activity in its area, which in turn allows U.S. forces to assist the Federal Police in their mission.

Upon arriving at the marketplace in Aamel, Sgt. 1st Class Christopher Mooring, an infantry patrol leader from Pine Level, N.C., entered an Iraqi FP station that militia groups once used as a headquarters.

Mooring said the willingness of the FP officers to share this information shows the progress of trust in its U.S. counterparts.

“At the beginning of our time working with the IFP, we were only getting bread crumbs of information,” Mooring said. “Now, the fact that they are willing to give us vital information is proof that they are ready to trust us with more crucial information to go on. They are keeping us in the loop now.”

The partnership between the FP and U.S. forces is generating a sense of security among the residents of Aamel by showing members of al-Qaeda in Iraq and other criminal groups that they are active in the Rashid district.

During the patrol, an Iraqi man approached the FP and told them about observing a truck dropping people and materials off into a field from which insurgents had previously used to fire rockets into his neighborhood. With that information, the American Soldiers and the FP scoured the field for a possible weapons cache, to no avail.

Following the search, the FP officer urged the man to call the police if he saw the truck in the area in the future.

Despite the fact that the search yielded nothing, it demonstrated to the residents of the area that the FP and U.S. forces are there to keep them safe. ✂

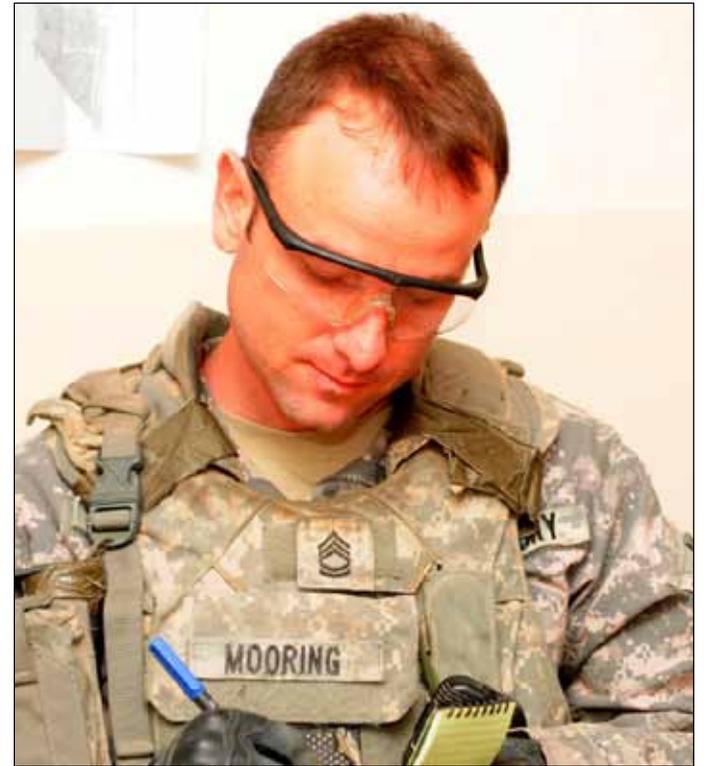


Photo by Spc. Daniel Schneider, MND-B PAO

Sgt. 1st Class Christopher Mooring, an infantry patrol leader of Company B, 252nd Combined Arms Battalion, 30th Heavy Brigade Combat Team takes notes during a meeting with the FP, Dec. 2.

CIVIL CAPACITY

School remodel to boost Iraqi economy

Story by Sgt. Samantha Beuterbaugh

MND-B PAO

BAGHDAD – American Soldiers of the 150th Armored Reconnaissance Squadron, 30th Heavy Brigade Combat Team rode into Abu Simich to participate in a ribbon-cutting ceremony of a local, refurbished school, Dec. 5, after a 30-day remodeling project.

Along with rewiring and re-facing of the entire inside and outside of the school, to include the roof, the once run-down al-Wissam school now has air conditioning units in every room, light sockets installed, a new septic tank and a new generator.

“We were tasked with identifying schools in the Radwanayah area that needed remodeling or additions, and al-Wissam was one that needed significant remodeling,” said Capt. Thomas Mills, from Winfield, W.Va.

Once U.S. forces located the schools identified for remodeling, the bidding process began with local contractors.

“We’re helping them put money back into their economy and building rapport with the locals,” said Spc. Jason Sizemore, of House Springs, Mo., a civil affairs specialist for the 1472nd Civil Affairs Company, attached to the 150th ARS.

Throughout the school’s progress, Mills’ team continually evaluated the local contractor’s work to ensure project standards were being met. The contractor received payments in increments as his work progressed. After the ribbon-cutting ceremony, Mills conducted his final walk-through of the school to ensure that the project had been completed.

“We give them work, check up on them and make sure everything goes according to paperwork,” said Sizemore.

Representatives from the Ministry of Education, politicians from the Nahia



Photo by Samantha Beuterbaugh, MND-B PAO

Above, a Nahia councilman cuts the ribbon to reopen the al-Wissam school, Dec. 5, as other members of the Nahia council, representatives of the Ministry of Education, local sheikhs, and Iraqi military leaders look on, in the village of Abu Simich.



Photo by Samantha Beuterbaugh, MND-B PAO

Capt. Thomas Mills (right), of Winfield, W.Va., shakes hands at al-Wissam school, Dec. 5, with a local shaykh who would like help from U.S. forces with remodeling another local school.

“We’re helping them put money back into their economy and building rapport with the locals.”

– Spc. Jason Sizemore

counsel, two local shaykhs and Iraqi Army officials, said they were very appreciative of U.S. forces playing a vital role in rebuilding the infrastructure of schools.

Officials felt that the new school would deny insurgents material for propaganda, said Mills; combating the insurgents argument to local residents that U.S. forces don’t provide for basic services.

The al-Wissam school is proof that U.S. forces are helping the Iraqi people in a big way.

The remodeling of the al-Wissam school is one of the many ways that U.S. forces, in conjunction with the Iraqi Army, are aiding Iraqi citizens in regaining control of their country and fighting against insurgency operations. ✂

IA lead combined search for weapons caches

Story by Pfc. Kimberly Hackbarth

4th SBCT PAO, 2nd Inf. Div.

BAGHDAD – Searching through brush and bricks, with the help of a military working dog, Soldiers from 4th Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division and the 24th Brigade, 6th Iraqi Army Division, were on the hunt for weapons caches and insurgents, Dec. 3.

A tip to the Iraqi Army led the combined force to a small town north of Fira Shia, a rural farming area northwest of Baghdad.

IA forces spearheaded the patrol while American Soldiers assisted and were ready to support in case anything was found.

“When we go with them, it empowers them,” said 1st Lt. James Harvie, a platoon leader. “We always let them take the lead and we always plan the missions together. It shows them that they can be successful and builds their confidence so they can take control when we finally leave.”

After more than an hour of searching different locations, the two groups cleared the area, and no caches were uncovered.

Not finding anything, however, isn’t a bad thing according to Harvie, a St. George, Utah native.

“It means there are not, as far as we know, stores of weapons,” said Harvie.

The Iraqi Army commander had a different take on the combined patrol, and on what not finding any weapons means.



Photo by Pfc. Kimberly Hackbarth, 4th SBCT PAO, 2nd Inf. Div.

Spc. Mark Feis (left), a military working dog handler and his working dog, Gero, both with the 72nd Military Police Detachment, conduct a joint search with Iraqi Soldiers in an area north of Fira Shia, Dec. 3.

“It’s not about good or bad, it’s about sending a message to bad guys,” said Iraqi Capt. Nomas Mohammed

Hussain. “We’re still here doing our job and we’re going to catch anyone doing bad stuff.” ✂

Air assault training broadens skills at JSS Aqur Quf

Story by Pfc. Kimberly Hackbarth

4th SBCT PAO, 2nd Inf. Div.

BAGHDAD – Like something out of an Army recruitment commercial, a helicopter landed in the center of an open sandy space, kicking up dust in every direction as Soldiers in full body armor jumped out and dropped flat on their stomachs with heads low and weapons aimed.

These Soldiers, however, were not in a commercial. They are members of 4th Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division practicing loading onto and off of a UH-60 Blackhawk during air assault training here, Dec. 4.

The platoon leader, 1st Lt. Mark Hamilton signed up his Soldiers for the training to meet the battalion’s objective of having every Soldier be familiar with air assault tactics.

“As a Stryker Brigade, there are places the vehicles that we use can’t go because of their size and weight,” said Hamilton. “It’s always good to have platoons capable of doing a quick air mission, so when the time comes to do an air assault mission, (the commander) can pick any platoon and know that they’re qualified,” said Hamilton, a Baltimore, Md. native.

For Pvt. Aaron Flanagan, a squad automatic weapon gunner, it was his first time taking part in this type of training. The Mount Vernon, Ill. native said he enjoyed jumping out of the Blackhawk onto the ground.

But while he had fun during the training, Flanagan knew that the training was important to the mission of



Photo by Pfc. Kimberly Hackbarth, 4th SBCT PAO, 2nd Inf. Div.

From left to right; Spc. Josh Millwee, of Comanche, Texas, Pfc. Nicholas Newcomb, of Danville, Pa., 1st Lt. Mark Hamilton, of Baltimore, Md., Spc. John Bailo, of Aubrey, Texas, and Pvt. Edgar Garcia, a native of Reno, Nev., all with 4th Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division, lie on their stomachs and provide security after exiting out of a UH-60 Blackhawk during air assault training here, Dec. 4.

the brigade.

“It shows that they want us to be on top of the game and know what we’re doing in different situations,” said Flanagan. “If we need to do something a Stryker can’t do, it shows the brigade is ready to do it, even if we are not in our normal vehicles.”

The training included a night assault that had the

Soldiers apply the same skills after the sun went down that they learned during the daytime.

By the end of the training day, the Soldiers, covered in dirt from their numerous exits from the Blackhawks, learned the basic skills needed to execute an air assault mission and looked forward to future training sessions. ✂



The Daily Charge can be viewed at the MND-B Portal, PAO homepage.



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Freedom Radio Baghdad
104.1 and 107.3
FM

Combined facility lays strong foundation

By Spc. Luisito Brooks

4th SBCT PAO, 2nd Inf. Div

BAGHDAD – American and Iraqi engineers raised the frame work on the nearly completed Joint Operation Center, here, bringing under one roof the resources of the Iraqi Army, Iraqi police forces and the U.S. Soldiers of the 4th Brigade, 2nd Infantry Division.

The new JOC will provide more room and equipment for the Iraqi and U.S. forces and will offer a direct avenue for faster coordination of personnel for operations.

“If an incident occurs in our (operating environment), the Iraqi Army can track it and request support directly from Iraqi police forces or [U.S.] Soldiers,” said Capt. Reed Markham, the JOC battle captain from Shreveport, La. “There will be representatives from each organization inside the JOC to facilitate that request.”

Soldiers from the 1434th Engineer Company, based out of Michigan, and the Iraqi Army are working hand in hand to construct the 2,500 square-foot building.

“We like to participate in all projects with [American] Soldiers because it gives us more experience with our jobs and we like to exchange new ideas about things,” said Mustafa, a 6th Division Iraqi Army electrician and carpenter.

“I like to use my hand to build things with my friend, the U.S. Army, because it lets me know that I really am working on something that will improve my country.”

Personnel that work at the current JOC are glad about the extra room that they will have at the new facility.

“In (the new) building, we will have more room for all the different organizations and equipment needed for information gathering and planning operations,” said Markham. “We are basically working out of a small office right now, so this will help in such a big way.”

The JOC will also provide a strong



Photo by Spc. Luisito Brooks, 4th SBCT PAO, 2nd Inf. Div.

Even with the right equipment, digging up mud and dirt can still have its obstacles to overcome. Here, Pfc. Dino Pelham (left), a Pittsford, Mich. native, and Pvt. Mitchell Spohn, a Clio, Mich. native, both assigned to the 1434th Engineer Company, use shovels to scrape chunks of mud from a bulldozer, Dec. 8.

foundation to strengthen relationships and build communication.

“We are setting the Iraqi Army up for success with this new JOC by building the relationship between not only IAs and U.S. Soldiers, but the IPs and Federal Iraqi Police,” said Master Sgt. Julio Armas, the operations non-commissioned officer in charge from Los Angeles.

“It is a mutual relationship, we help them with training, resource and equipment and they help will intelligence gathering. We are always communicating with each other.”

The \$80,000 project is slated to be fully operational in early 2010.

“The transition to the new JOC will be smooth,” said Markham. ✂



Photo by Spc. Luisito Brooks, 4th SBCT PAO, 2nd Inf. Div.

Soldiers direct a bulldozer that is excavating an area where pipes will be laid. The pipes will supply the new Joint Operation Center with water.

1-89 CAV supports Federal Police in island mission



Soldiers from B Troop, 1st Squadron, 89th Cavalry Squadron, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division, provide security for members of the Iraqi Federal Police as they conduct a deliberate clearance, Dec. 11, of an island in the Tigris River which was suspected of being used as a weapons and personnel way point for insurgent forces in the area.

Photo by Spc. Jesse Gross, 55th Combat Camera Company

By Maj. Timothy Hyde

2nd BCT PAO, 10th Mtn. Div.

BAGHDAD – Soldiers from the 1st Squadron, 89th Cavalry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division supported their partnered Iraqi Federal Police unit in a clearing operation of an island in the Tigris River, here, Dec. 11.

The operation was to prevent the trafficking of enemy weapons and personnel across the river and into the rural areas east of Baghdad.

“We had to coordinate with the 1st Air [Cavalry Brigade] for transportation and close air support, [explosive ordinance disposal] for any found ordnance and military K-9 units to help search for ordnance,” said Capt. Joshua Dailey, of Monmouth, Ore.

To prepare for the operation, the

American troops conducted training and rehearsals with their FP counterparts. The training included coordination for close air support, Soldier formations while conducting the clearing operation, and “sack load” training for loading and unloading personnel and equipment on and off the aircraft.



The American Soldiers then observed the FP unit as they conducted the search of the island to deter the use of the island as a cache point or way point for movement of personnel or weapons. ✂

227th Aviation Regiment leaves Taji for al-Asad



*Photos by Sgt. Travis Zielinski, 1stACB,
1st Cav. Div. PAO*

CAMP TAJI, Iraq — UH-60 Black Hawk helicopters from 3rd Battalion, 227th Aviation Regiment, 1st Air Cavalry Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, depart the flightline, here, Dec. 3, on their way to al-Asad, where 3-227th will become a detachment conducting aviation operations.



Engineers celebrate National Guard's 373rd birthday

Story by Sgt. Tracy Knowles

16th Eng Bde., UPAR

BAGHDAD — In 1636, the first American militia regiments were organized by the general courts of the Massachusetts Bay Colony.

Starting with the Pequot War in 1637, through the present day, the Army National Guard has defended freedom in every war or conflict our nation has fought, making them the oldest of the U.S. armed forces.

On Dec. 13, hundreds of service members observed the National Guard's 373rd birthday, here, on Camp Victory.

The 101st Engineer Battalion, 181st Infantry Regiment, 101st Field Artillery and 182nd Cavalry Regiment are the only units in the U.S. Army that can display the Lexington-Concord battle streamer because they descended from units that fought in the opening battles, on April 19, 1775, of the Revolutionary War.

Soldiers of the 101st Eng. Bn. continued this tradition of protecting our Nation in June, 2009, by deploying in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom, earning their 36th battle streamer.

The birthday celebration and short ceremony took place at al-Faw Palace. The youngest member of the 101st Engineer Battalion, Pfc. Jeramie Burgos, of Worcester, Mass., read the National Guard poem.

"Being part of this celebration is an honor,



Photo by Sgt. Tracy Knowles, 101st Eng. Bn. PAO, 16th Eng Bde., MND-B

Members of the 101st Engineer Battalion, the oldest unit in the Army National Guard, along with service members from the National Guard Bureau, assist the youngest member of the 101st Eng. Bn., Pfc. Jeramie Burgos (right), of Worcester, Mass., in the cake-cutting ceremony celebrating the Army National Guard's 373rd birthday at al-Faw Palace, Dec. 13.

being the youngest member of the oldest military organization in the United States Army is pretty sweet," said Burgos.

Maj. Gen. Peter Aylward, MNC-I Deputy Commanding General for Iraqi Security Forces Military, spoke about the history of the National Guard and the importance of the Citizen Soldier. Currently, there are over 21,000 National Guard

Soldiers deployed in support of OIF.

"Today you [Soldiers] are helping to bring freedom to Iraq, thank you for your hard work and sacrifice," said Aylward.

The 101st Engineer Battalion is another year older and continues the tradition of proudly defending freedom, protecting dreams, and standing ready to fight at a moment's notice.

FIRST TEAM  **LIVE THE LEGEND**

Mother's good fortune benefits crew chief

Story by Sgt. Alun Thomas

1st ACB, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs

CAMP TAJI, Iraq – Sometimes, all it takes is a piece of luck to change the direction of somebody's life, for better or worse.

For Spc. Opeyemi Akinwumi – pronounced o-pay-emmy akin-woo-me – it was for the better and he has his mother to thank for it, despite heavy odds.

Through his mother's good fortune at winning a green card lottery, Akinwumi's life was changed drastically; it allowed him to move to the U.S. from Nigeria and pursue a new path, one which would eventually lead to the Army.

For the first 20 years of his life Akinwumi, now from Wylie, Texas, a crew chief in Company C, 1st Battalion, 227th Aviation Regiment, 1st Air Cavalry Brigade, lived in Ondo State, Nigeria, a place it was sometimes hard growing up in, he said.

"You have to hustle for yourself and go to school because there's a lot of poverty over there," Akinwumi said. "Most of the time you don't have people that are going to take care of you. The economy isn't really that great, so people from the middle class have to be able to go to school."

Akinwumi's parents divorced when he was young and he found himself working as a laborer to save money for college and a future.

"Sometimes I had to go to a farm, do some labor work and take the money I earned and use it to pay for school," Akinwumi said. "You have to do what you have to do to go to school. Without school you can't go too far."

Despite the hardships, Akinwumi said Nigeria provided a good upbringing.

"There was a lot of mass unemployment, but for me Nigeria was comfortable because it was free," he said. "I loved farming and working with my hands ... I love sport and I played soccer for my college too. It was good."

Akinwumi said Nigeria was free of conflict when he lived there, but many people still sought to move to the U.S., including



Photo by Sgt. Alun Thomas, 1st ACB, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs

Spc. Opeyemi Akinwumi, from Wylie, Texas, a crew chief in Company C, 1st Battalion, 227th Aviation Regiment, 1st Air Cavalry Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, tightens the panels on the tail of an AH-64D Apache attack helicopter.

his mother.

"She wanted to come to America to study and have a better life," Akinwumi explained. "She put in for the green card lottery on the internet and finally won after years of trying."

As his mother and stepfather settled in the U.S. as teachers, Akinwumi said he was content in Nigeria, until his mother beckoned for him to visit.

"After my mother had been there for a few years she said to me 'it's been a while, come and spend some time with me,'" Akinwumi said. "I came over after I graduated college in 2005 just to visit. I thought it was better in America because there were more jobs and I could work anywhere, so the opportunity was there."

Luckily for Akinwumi the transition into citizenship was easy, due to his mother's status as a naturalized U.S. citizen which allowed her to sponsor him.

His next task was finding work to finance college, despite already having a degree from Nigeria.

"I had a degree in computer science from Nigeria but I never used it. When I came to America I wanted to change my line of work," he said. "I worked [retail], at gas stations and went to school full time to get my AMP (Aviation Mechanic Powerplant) license."

This proved too expensive for Akinwumi, who said the proposition of joining the Army to help pay for his education was a good alternative.

"I thought if I joined the military they'd be able to give the same education and I won't have to pay for it," he said.

Akinwumi's next stop was basic training, which he said was a positive experience.

"I knew it was going to be challenging being with people I didn't know that

had different ideas and backgrounds from me," he said. "It was a good thing because it helped me learn more about people and their cultures."

Akinwumi's first duty station was at Camp Humphreys in South Korea, where he stayed for a year before he joined the 1st ACB.

Akinwumi said he wants to put in a packet for Officer Candidate School, but is still unsure about making the Army a career.

"It's 50/50 right now ... but probably," Akinwumi said, with a hearty grin.

One thing Akinwumi is certain of, however, is making sure he returns to Nigeria on a regular basis.

"I go back every year and that's a promise I made to myself," he said. "My grandmother and my uncle are still there ... so are my nephews. They like what I'm doing." ✂





DEC 21

World War II

On this day in American Military History

General George S. Patton Dies

On this day, General George S. Patton, commander of the U.S. 3rd Army, died from injuries suffered not in battle but in a freak car accident. He was 60 years old.

Descended from a long line of military men, Patton graduated from the West Point Military Academy in 1909. He represented the United States in the 1912 Olympics—as the first American participant in the pentathlon. He did not win a medal. He went on to serve in the Tank Corps during World War I, an experience that made Patton a dedicated proponent of tank warfare.

During World War II, as commander of the U.S. 7th Army, he captured Palermo, Sicily, in 1943 by just such means. Patton's audacity became evident in 1944, when, during the Battle of the Bulge, he employed an unorthodox strategy that involved a 90-degree pivoting move of his 3rd Army forces, enabling him to speedily relieve the besieged Allied defenders of Bastogne, Belgium.

Along the way, Patton's mouth proved as dangerous to his career as the Germans. When he berated and slapped a hospitalized soldier diagnosed with "shell shock," but whom Patton accused of "malingering," the press turned on him, and pressure was applied to cut him down to size. He might have found himself enjoying early retirement had not General Dwight Eisenhower and General George Marshall intervened on his behalf. After several months of inactivity, he was put back to work.

And work he did—at the Battle of the Bulge, during which Patton once again succeeded in employing a complex and quick-witted strategy, turning the German thrust into Bastogne into an Allied counterthrust, driving the Germans east across the Rhine.

In March 1945, Patton's army swept through southern Germany into Czechoslovakia—which he was stopped from capturing by the Allies, out of respect for the Soviets' postwar political plans for Eastern Europe.

Patton had many gifts, but diplomacy was not one of them. After the war, while stationed in Germany, he criticized the process of denazification, the removal of former Nazi Party members from positions of political, administrative, and governmental power. His impolitic press statements questioning the policy caused Eisenhower to remove him as U.S. commander in Bavaria. He was transferred to the 15th Army Group, but in December of 1945 he suffered a broken neck in a car accident and died less than two weeks later.



(Left) The wreckage of Patton's Cadillac staff car. (Above) Patton was buried with full military honors. The funeral was held Dec. 24, 1945, in the white-crossed cemetery whose rolling land General Patton's army had liberated only a year before.

(Above) Patton is buried at the Luxembourg American Cemetery and Memorial in Hamm, Luxembourg alongside Soldiers of the US Third Army.

1945

Commandos pay tribute to fallen Soldier

Story by Sgt. Jennie Burrett

2nd BCT PAO, 10th Mtn. Div.

BAGHDAD – Friends and comrades said goodbye to a 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division Soldier, who died from non-combat related injuries, Nov. 27, during a memorial ceremony, Dec. 3.

Pfc. Michael Rogers, a 22 year old material storage handling specialist from White Sulphur Springs, Mont., assigned to Company A, 210th Brigade Support Battalion, 2nd BCT, 10th Mtn. Div., was serving his first deployment in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

“Michael was more than a Soldier, to many of you he was also a friend, brother and trusted confidant,” said Lt. Col. Thomas Murphy, the battalion commander.

“A member of our close knit provider family and, quite frankly, the goofy kid that always made us smile.”

“I am very thankful I had a chance to know him,” said Pfc. Alaina Coon, a close friend of Rogers. “He always had a smile on his face, acted goofy and always had something nice to say, especially just to see someone else smile.”

Rogers enlisted in the Army in May 2008. He completed his basic training at Fort Leonard Wood, Mo. and Advanced Individual Training at Fort Lee, Va.

His awards and decorations include the Army Commendation Medal, the Army Good Conduct Medal, the National Defense Service Medal, the Iraqi Campaign Medal, the Global War on Terrorism Service Medal, the Army Service Ribbon, and the Overseas Service Ribbon.

His is survived by his mother. ✂



U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Jennie Burrett, 2nd BCT PAO, 10th Mtn. Div.

Col. David Miller (left), a native of Evanston, Ill., the commander of 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division, and Command Sgt. Maj. Joe Montour, of Amarillo, Texas, render honors to Pfc. Michael A. Rogers, from White Sulphur Springs, Mont., during a memorial ceremony, Dec. 3.

Dash for Cash means more than money

Story by Spc. Kelly LeCompte

30th HBCT PAO, MND-B

BAGHDAD – Service members and civilians honored a fallen 30th Heavy Brigade Combat Team comrade with an annual event, which this year comprised of four foot races held in both Iraq and the National Guard unit’s home-state of North Carolina, Dec. 5 and 6.

The race, named the Dash for Cash, in honor of the late Capt. Christopher Cash, a former company commander from the 30th Brigade Combat Team, who died during the brigade’s last deployment to Iraq in 2004.

It was the fifth year for the annual event held in Greenville, N.C., the original site of the competition and the city near where Cash lived. Three years ago, an annual sister-race was organized at Forward Operating Base Warhorse, near Baqubah, Iraq, where Cash was serving with A Company at the time of his death.

This year, two more races were added; one at Forward Operating Base Falcon, south of Baghdad, where the brigade is headquartered and serving a second tour, and at Forward Operating Base Mahmudiyah, where the 120th Combined Arms Battalion, 30th HBCT is located.

Runners pay a small registration fee to participate, and donations for the event are also accepted. Proceeds go towards a fund called the Cash Foundation, which is used to award a scholarship each year to three colleges: North Carolina Wesleyan College, where Cash earned a bachelor’s degree; East Carolina University, where Cash earned a second bachelor’s degree and a master’s degree; and Pitt County Community College, located in Cash’s hometown of Winterville, N.C.

Dawn Cash-Salau, Cash’s widow, formed the Dash for Cash Committee and created the race after representatives from Wesleyan contacted her about starting a memorial scholarship in his name.

“I wanted this race to be exactly what



U.S. Army photo by Spc. Kelly LeCompte, 30th HBCT PAO, MND-B

Runners of the Dash for Cash race get ready to take off at Forward Operating Base Mahmudiyah, south of Baghdad, Dec. 6. The annual race is named after the late Capt Christopher Cash, a company commander with the brigade who died in combat during the brigade’s last deployment to Iraq in 2004. Four locations held the race this year; three in Iraq and one in Greenville, N.C., where the original competition began.



U.S. Army photo by Spc. Kelly LeCompte, 30th HBCT PAO, MND-B

A Soldier of the 30th Heavy Brigade Combat Team receives a number on his hand before the Dash for Cash race at Forward Operating Base Falcon, Dec. 5.

Chris would want, and I wanted it to represent the person Chris was, so I asked a group of Chris’ dearest friends to help,” Cash-Salau said of forming the committee. “I am so grateful for each of them and their contribution to what has grown to be a wonderful event to honor Chris every year.”

“Chris knew the importance of an education,” Cash-Salau said. “To continue things that were important to him we award college scholarships in his memory.”

Capt. Max Stroud, was a platoon leader with Cash, and has been a part of the Dash for Cash Committee since its inception. Stroud was also Cash’s neighbor in Winterville.

“Christmas was Chris’s favorite holiday,” Stroud said of the reason for holding the race every December.

Stroud is serving a second deployment

with the brigade, and ran the race at FOB Falcon.

“Dawn said 650 people ran this year in Greenville,” Stroud said. “Three hundred and twenty ran in it the first year.”

Sgt. Barb Russell, of Jacksonville, N.C., joined the N.C. National Guard in July of 2007 and learned of the event from recruiters that had known Cash. She ran in N.C. in 2007 and ran it again this year at FOB Falcon. She was the first female finisher.

“The minute I saw the first flier go up, I was like, ‘Good to go, I’m going to go run,’” Russell said.

“I think it’s a good cause,” Russell said. “It’s nice to know [Cash’s family] is able to generate some good out of something that was so devastating.

“As long as I can run, and I’m in the area, I’m going to keep doing it every year.” ✂

Engineers teach IA proper maintenance

By Staff Sgt. April Mota
16th Eng. Bde, UPAR

BAGHDAD – Soldiers from the 101st Engineer Battalion trained Soldiers of the 6th Iraqi Field Engineer Regiment how to repair faults on the Iraqi's equipment here, Dec. 4.

Some of the repairs included fixing a turret handle, a door bracket, and a transmission that shifted intermittently.

Spc. Brett Bonina of Bellingham, Mass., spent some time working with the Iraqi Soldiers on the equipment. He showed them how to use available resources to fix various problems. Bonina, along with another welder, Spc. John Clarke of Northbridge, Mass., helped fix a door problem by welding a bolt to screw the new locking mechanism in place.

“You are not always going to have the right part when you need it. Sometimes you need to be creative and think of something else that will work,” said Bonina.

This was Bonina's first time working with the Iraqi Army. He enjoyed working with the Iraqi Soldiers and helping them get their equipment fully mission capable.

“Our mission here is to give them the help they need to support themselves. They've got the equipment, now they need the knowledge,” said Bonina.

Sgt. Fouad, a driver for the 6th IA, has attended three training classes with U.S. forces.

“Working on the vehicles together was good. This was a better class than just learning how to operate the equipment. We



Photo by Staff Sgt. April Mota, 101st Eng. Bn. PAO, 16th Eng. Bde., MND-B

Using the proper forms, Staff Sgt. Frank Lopez (left), of Webster, Mass., explains to Spc. Malik, of the 6th Iraqi Army Field Engineer Regiment, how to order parts needed to repair a vehicle, Dec. 4.

fixed our problems together,” said Fouad.

Staff Sgt. Frank Lopez, of Webster, Mass., has taught many courses to Iraqi Soldiers, including how to order parts.

“This was a nice change of pace, we

worked together, and they are really into it,” said Lopez.

With some creative problem-solving skills and teamwork, both the U.S. and Iraqi Soldiers were pleased that all of the

Iraqi equipment was up and running by the end of the course. Having fully mission capable equipment is integral to the Iraqi Army successfully completing their missions. ✂

IA trains on communication and intelligence

Course designed to help Iraqi Soldiers use, maintain radios in counter-insurgency fight

By Staff Sgt. April Mota
16th Eng. Bde, UPAR

BAGHDAD – U.S. engineers conducted classes on radio operation, maintenance operations and counter insurgency operations at Old Ministry of Defense, in central Baghdad, for the troops of the 11th Iraqi Army Field Engineer Regiment, Dec. 9.

Spc. Carlo Vannatta, of Norwalk, Ohio, and Master Sgt. Jim Fritts, of Sugar Grove, Ohio, both with the 16th Engineer Brigade, spent three weeks preparing their classes on radio communication; preparing handouts in both English and Arabic. The class covered basic operations, components of the radio, operator tasks, and maintenance.

“The purpose of this class is to get [Iraqi Soldiers] more familiar with the radios so they won't have problems later on down the road,” said Vannatta.

Fritts addressed the fact that these radios are state of the art, pointing out that as technology advances radio communication

becomes stronger and smaller.

Vannatta explained how vital radio communication is to the mission.

“If you see anything dangerous, you need to be able to communicate that,” said Vannatta, “[other Soldiers] need to know what to look for.”

Following the communications class, Maj. Hugo Silva, of Reynoldsburg, Ohio, taught a class on counter-insurgency operations and intelligence operations.

His course covered the significance of information gathering during missions.

“This class will help the Iraqi Soldiers understand how to prepare before they enter a battle space,” said Silva. “It helps them understand what information needs to be collected and the reason for collecting it.”

Engineers of the 16th Eng. Bde. continue to strengthen the partnership between the U.S. Forces and the Iraqi Army. With the information taught during these classes, the Iraqi Soldiers will be more capable of achieving mission success on their own, in the future. ✂



Photo by Staff Sgt. April Mota, 101st Eng. Bn. PAO 16th Eng. Bde. MND-B

Following along in the handout, a Soldier from the 11th Iraqi Army Field Engineer Regiment listens to Maj. Hugo Silva, of Reynoldsburg, Ohio, 16th Engineer Brigade, teach a class at Old Ministry of Defense on Dec. 9.

Leader's attend maintenance course

Story by Sgt. Mary Phillips

30th HBCT PAO, MND-B

BAGHDAD – Many Soldiers have heard the phrase “complacency kills,” especially when it comes to tasks like vehicle maintenance.

“As we near the end of our tour, we find ourselves slipping in some areas of performance,” said Lt. Colonel Bernie Williford, battalion commander for the 230th Brigade Support Battalion, 30th Heavy Brigade Combat Team. “Maintenance is one area that starts to slip because quite frankly most people don’t enjoy doing it.”

Williford, of Burgaw N.C., taught a preventive maintenance and checks services class at Forward Operating Base Falcon to the leaders of the 230th BSB, Dec. 5, as a way to combat the complacency.

The class included company commanders, platoon leaders, and senior non-commissioned officers. Williford started with a brief over-view of conducting a proper PMCS and how to fill out the paperwork involved.

In small groups they had to complete a monthly, by the book, PMCS on a vehicle used by their company.

For several, this also meant greasing the wench cable on the front of the vehicle.

“I’ve never had to do the cable before,” said Capt. Tim Smith, of Matthews, N.C. “So this is a first for me.”

Smith, the company commander for the Convoy Security Company, and other Soldiers spent almost an hour unwinding, cleaning, greasing, and rewinding



Photo by Sgt. Mary Phillips, 30th HBCT PAO, MND-B

Capt. Kenny Ragsdale, of Fayetteville, N.C., (left), and 1st Lt. Ryan Johnson, of Clayton, N.C., both of Company A, 230th Brigade Support Battalion, 30th Heavy Brigade Combat Team, look over a technical manual while conducting preventive maintenance checks and services during a class at Forward Operating Base Falcon, Dec. 5.



Photo by Sgt. Mary Phillips, 30th HBCT PAO, MND-B

1st Lt. Nicole Ebert, of Kewaskum, Wis., with the 230th Brigade Support Battalion, 30th Heavy Brigade Combat Team, checks the fluids on a vehicle during the preventive maintenance checks and services class

the wench cable on the front of a mine resistant ambush protected vehicle.

On average, each group spent over three hours performing PMCS on their vehicle. This is part of what Williford wanted to teach the leadership within his battalion; the amount of time it takes to do it right.

“The officers and non-commissioned officers learned some very key points today,” said Williford. “They have a better understanding of how long it takes to do maintenance correctly and thoroughly.”

It’s not every day a lieutenant colonel teaches a maintenance class. Soldiers took this as a sign of Williford’s concern for his troops.

“Being willing to instruct the correct procedure for PMCS, coming out to do hands on training, and for [Williford] to stay out here as long as he has, shows he’s interested in his Soldiers, and the equip-

ment he is responsible for,” said Sgt. Ellis Atkins, of Statesville, N.C.

Williford hopes that the Soldiers will take what they learned from the class back to their companies.

“By conducting this class with the leaders, it refocuses them on what right looks like and gets them back up to standard,” said Williford. “We talk about fighting complacency and by conducting this class, leaders were able to see how it is starting to affect their unit’s maintenance status.”

He also hopes this class will help keep Soldiers from having to deal with maintenance issues when on the road in Iraq.

“This is just one more area that if we maintain our standards, doesn’t become an off base issue,” said Williford. “It really is no fun sitting on the side of the road, hooking up the wrecker to the truck that broke down in Iraq.” ✂

Soldiers aim to be the best at pistol competition

Story by Sgt. Mary Phillips

30th HBCT PAO, MND-B

BAGHDAD - Soldiers at Forward Operating Base Falcon held the first pistol competition using the Engagement Skills Trainer 2000, here, Dec. 11.

The EST 2000 is a video based simulator that gives Soldier the opportunity to practice marksmanship without using any rounds. Weapons are wired into a computer and shots are fired at a large screen.

Twenty-eight competitors simulated

having 30 rounds each to identify and engage ten human-sized ten targets. The competition called for two shots in the chest of the target and one in the head. Five points were given for each hit, but there must be a head shot to be able to receive any points for that target.

“We wanted to do something different,” said Arthur Struck, the EST 2000 operator. “The bottom line is, I’m here for the guys [Soldiers], if they have an interest, I’m willing to put it on.”

Soldiers welcomed the opportunity to use the EST 2000 for a little enjoyment.

“It was fun,” said Spc. Joshua Bigham, serving with the 230th Brigade Support Battalion, 30th Heavy Brigade Combat Team. “You get to come out here with all these 30th Bde. folks, it’s something to get your mind off of everything else. It’s a little friendly competition.”

Bigham, of Carolina Beach, N.C., also thought the competition was a good chance to train.

“Any time you get the opportunity to shoot, regardless of what weapon system it is, you improve your skills as a Soldier,” said Bigham.

Final scores for the competition ranged from zero points to one-hundred points out of a possible 150 points. Maj. Kevin Ziegler, of Colorado Springs, Colo. serving with Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 30th HBCT, received the highest score.

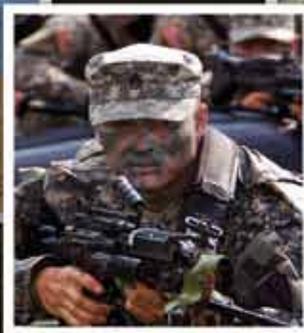
“I was never any good at golf, so instead of hitting the golf balls with a club, I’d shoot at them with a pistol,” said Ziegler after learning he had won the pistol match.

There are plans to have a similar competition monthly. ✂



2009

The Year of the Noncommissioned Officer



Army NCO - No One is More Professional than I...

Shoot ... Move ...

U.S. Forces train IA Soldiers how to defend

Story and photos by Staff Sgt. Jeff Hansen

MND-B PAO

BAGHDAD – During this vital transition period, training the Iraqi Army on basic battle drills is more important than ever.

This fact has not escaped Soldiers with 3rd Battalion, 4th Air Defense Artillery Regiment, who work with IA troops at Contingency Operating Location Constitution, here, to help them learn these critical tasks. Select members of this unit are part of Multi-National Division – Baghdad's 6th IA Military Transition Team.

"The Iraqi Soldiers are ready to learn," said Capt. Edward Walter, the 6th IA MiTT advisor. "They are motivated and ready to train."

Walter and his team, part of the only airborne ADAR in the Army, are training the 6th IA Division's Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance team on what the American Soldiers call "10-level", or basic, warrior tasks and drills.

The ISR team conducted squad movements, reacting to direct and indirect fire, and going through two days of unarmed combatives. The training takes just over two weeks, said Walter, and his hope is that the ISR can eventually conduct train-the-trainer classes to instruct their own Soldiers with little-to-no American assistance.

"The problem is the manpower," said Staff Sgt. Philip Kightlinger, a MiTT squad leader. With more personnel, he feels the IA would be able to more effectively train their own troops.

The overall plan for this type of program, Kightlinger said, is for Iraqi platoon and squad leaders to train on higher-level tasks to become subject-matter experts. This way, they could train themselves on the lower-level tasks.

With IA units being short-handed, accomplishing this goal has proven more difficult than originally anticipated. However, Kightlinger and Walter agree that the Soldiers have been eager to learn and are very cooperative with their American counterparts.

The 6th IA MiTT, focused their instruction on squad-sized movements rather than individual Army Warrior Tasks.

"These guys have the field experience," stated Walter. "We're just trying to ensure they can work in teams out there."

During reacting to indirect fire, American Soldiers acted as advisors, co-workers and even "the enemy" during this drill, which involved a lot of running, diving and hand signals for the ISR team.

With an assessment after the completion of the drill, Sgt. Andrew Reinheimer, a native of Radcliff, Ky., told the ISR Soldiers he was impressed with their motivation and overall performance.

"Now just imagine having to do that in full battle-rattle," he jokingly added.

Along with the squad movements, two days were dedicated to instructing the IA in Army combatives.

First Lt. Nick Salinas, the officer in charge of the MiTT section conducting combatives training, stated

this was the first time his team had given the block of instruction and was not usually part of the two-week course.

"The Iraqi commanders specifically requested the combatives training," said Salinas. His Soldiers, previously a personnel security detachment, spent several weeks preparing for this training.

The ISR team has shown great appreciation for the training the Americans have provided, and even invited the MiTT to eat in their dining facility, Dec. 10; something which is usually reserved for VIPs.

"I think it means a lot to [the Iraqi Soldiers] to have us training right beside them," said Walter.

After each training day, the Iraqi and American platoon leaders conducted a joint assessment of the training in front of the ISR team's formation. The MiTT members feel this not only builds camaraderie, but also gives Iraqi noncommissioned and commissioned officers a chance to work on their troop leading procedures.

With the help of the men of 4th ADAR, the 6th IA Division will be one step closer to self-reliance as American forces prepare for a complete transition. Though their mission may seem behind-the-scenes, the MiTT Soldiers are proud of the job they are doing here. ✂



Staff Sgt. Errick Gordon, a squad leader of the 3rd Battalion, 4th Air Defense Artillery Regiment, Division Special Troops Battalion, 1st Cavalry Division, demonstrates in the sand the actions to take upon contact with the enemy to an Iraqi squad leader at Contingency Operating Location Constitution, Dec. 10.



A military policeman (right) from the 6th Iraqi Army Division tries to fend off blows from 1st Lt. Nick Salinas using his newly acquired combatives skills.

Communicate!

and selves and move across battlefield



Staff Sgt. Errick Gordon explains to a 6th Iraqi Army Division Soldier how to move his troops across the battlefield during a react to indirect fire battle drill.



Sgt. Luis Pratts (right), assigned to 3rd Battalion, 4th Air Defense Artillery Regiment, Division Special Troops Battalion, 1st Cavalry Division and Brooklyn, N.Y. native, helps an Iraqi Soldier concentrate on improving his form during Army combatives training.



Spc. Dominic Bonds from Chester, Va., assigned to 3rd Battalion, 4th Air Defense Artillery Regiment, Division Special Troops Battalion, 1st Cavalry Division demonstrates correct defensive posture when properly establishing a 360-degree security perimeter during a squad halt battle drill.

U.S. forces hand over JSS Copper

Story by Sgt. Mary Phillips

30th HBCT PAO, MND-B

BAGHDAD - After a long and tiresome process, Soldiers of Battery A, 113th Field Artillery, 30th Heavy Brigade Combat Team, can now put Joint Security Station Copper, behind them.

The Soldiers lived and operated there for the past seven months, sharing the land with 3rd Battalion, 55th Brigade, 17th Iraqi Army Division, until Dec. 10, when the property was returned to the Government of Iraq.

The IA will continue to use part of the land as their base, while the GoI decides what to do with the land.

Opened during the surge in 2007, JSS Copper continued operations until the handover. Maj. Mathew Fitch, the 30th HBCT Brigade engineer officer, hopes the land owner can be paid for the use of his land.

"The 30th Brigade is working with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Real Estate Department to get compensation to the land owner for the use of his property," said Fitch, of Falls Church, Va.

U.S. Soldiers continue to work with the IA in the area; traveling to conduct joint patrols and key leader engagements in the vicinity, but security will mostly be controlled by the IA.

"It's a milestone," said Battery A commander, Capt. Brian Gill. "I think it's a reflection of the Iraqi battalion

here. They operate with less and less direct support from U.S. forces. It's an indication of their improved abilities; their abilities to target insurgents in the area and build relationships with the locals," said Gill, of Raleigh, N.C.

"I feel good about closing this base because it is one step closer to going home," said Pfc. David Spence, of Charlotte N.C.. "[The IA] have stepped up. It's good for the Iraqi Army and the Iraqi people that the IA can take over now."

Sgt. Robert Coleman, of Lawn-dale N.C., agreed with Spence.

"It means we're making progress and the U.S. is on the withdrawal," said Coleman.

This is the 30th HBCT's second deployment to Iraq, the first time being in 2004, and the base closure is an example of the change that many of the Soldiers have witnessed.

"When we were ending our last deployment [to Iraq] there were a lot of bases opening and now as we are ending this deployment there are a lot of bases closing," said Gill. "It shows what the Iraqi Army has been able to accomplish in the last couple of years." ✂



Photo by Sgt. Mary Phillips, 30th HBCT PAO, MND-B

Soldiers of Battery A, 113th Field Artillery, 30th Heavy Brigade Combat Team work together to roll up a heavy cable at Joint Security Station Copper, south of Baghdad, Dec. 10. Turning off the power was one of the last things the Soldiers did before signing over the property to the Government of Iraq.

Engineers build supply building for First Team

Photos by Sgt. Tracy Knowles, 16th Eng. Bde., UPAR



BAGHDAD - Burr Oak, Mich. native, Spc. Joshua Tillmon, 1434th Engineer Company, 101st Engineer Battalion begins running wire, Dec. 2. The building is being constructed for the 1st Cavalry Division here on Camp Liberty.



Spc. Corey Brown, from Ann Arbor, Mich., with the 1434th Engineer Company, prepares to nail in trusses that will support the roof on the 1st Cavalry Divisions new supply building



A platoon-sized element can construct a standard building, such as the one here in ten to fourteen days.

Working dog's bark worth the bite

Story by Pfc. Kimberly Hackbarth

4th SBCT PAO, 2nd Inf. Div.

BAGHDAD – While preparing for a Dec. 3 mission to search for hidden weapons caches, U.S. troops 1st Platoon, Company A, 4th Battalion, 9th Infantry Regiment Soldiers and their partners in the 24th Brigade, 6th Iraqi Army Division realized they were missing something: a military working dog.

“Without dogs, it might take too much time to find what we’re searching for,” said Iraqi Army Capt. Nomas Mohammed Hussain, a company commander with the 6th IA Division.

Military working dogs are natural experts at sniffing out bombs, drugs and other dangers, a skill modern technology is unable to replicate.

Because of this, these talented canines are in high demand, and not every unit who wants to use them has access to them.

So when the Americans decided they needed a dog for their mission, they arranged for a dog and his handler, from the 72nd Military Police Detachment.

“Dogs can come [to Aqur Quf] overnight, which is what they usually do, but at the end of the day we need to take them back so they can be properly cared for,” said 1st Lt. James Harvie. “The best facilities for that are on [Victory Base Complex] as far as I know.”

Integrating the dogs into the planning of a mission is a lot of work, but the animals are a very useful asset that the company tries to use as much as possible, explained Harvie.

For Nomas, it was his first time utilizing military working dogs on a patrol, adding that the dogs provide a very helpful service and he was glad they were able to make the trip out to the joint security station on the city’s



Photo by Pfc. Kimberly Hackbarth, 4th SBCT PAO, 2nd Inf. Div.



Photo by Pfc. Kimberly Hackbarth, 4th SBCT PAO, 2nd Inf. Div.

(Left) Spc. Mark Feis, a military working dog handler commands his military working dog, Gero, both with 72nd Military Police Detachment, to search a rooftop for explosives on a home north of Fira Shia, Dec. 3. (Right) Spc. Feis commands Gero to jump up and search the side of a closet inside of the same home. Feis and Gero assisted American and Iraqi Soldiers in a search for caches and insurgents.

western side.

After returning the dog and its handler back home at the completion of the mission, the U.S. Soldiers returned

to base knowing that though the trip was a little out of way, in the long run, the capabilities the dogs bring to the mission saves both time and quite possibly lives. ✂

Doctor volunteers during downtime

Story by Sgt. Samantha Beuterbaugh

MND-B PAO

BAGHDAD – “I volunteer because I remember what it was like when I was the medical provider in charge of a clinic,” said Col. Brett Call, the brigade field surgeon attached to the 16th Engineer Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division.

Call, an Amanda, Ohio native, volunteers at the Witmer Troop Medical Clinic, twice a week after a full workday.

“It’s nice to get some relief, a way to give the docs a breather,” Call said.

When the Ohio National Guard Soldier was in charge of a clinic during a previous deployment, Call said he would work 36 hours on, 12 hours off.

As the brigade field surgeon, he works at the brigade’s aid station, teaches classes, helps with sick call, prepares special staff reports and occasionally fills in as an ambulatory medic, and still makes time to volunteer in support of the busy doctors in charge of clinics.

“We were short on docs, and Col. Call volunteered to come take a spot,” said Spc. Jason Anderson, a combat medic assigned to Whitmer TMC.

Anderson said several captains and lieutenants have volunteered, but he’s never seen a colonel volunteer before. After Call gets done with his patients, he sits down with the combat medics to explain the steps he took in each case, he added.

Call volunteers at the Witmer TMC every Tuesday



Photo by Sgt. Samantha Beuterbaugh, MND-B PAO

(Right) Col. Brett Call, of the 16th Engineer Brigade, listens breathing patterns of Sgt. Isaias Medellini, of the 812th quartermaster company, as part of a routine preliminary check, Dec. 10.

morning and Friday evening. When he first arrived, he was volunteering four to five days a week because the clinic was short two physicians due to redeployment processes.

Field surgeons typically deploy every 12 to 18 months for a 90-day period. The 90-day rotations are designed to prevent family practitioners, called to active duty, from losing their practice when they are deployed.

On the civilian side of the spectrum, Call is an emergency room physician for the Berger Health System in Circleville, Ohio. BHS has been very supportive of his time devoted to the military, Call said.

This is Call’s fourth deployment, and he is already scheduled for a fifth tour to Afghanistan. He keeps his deployment packing list ready at all times.

But it’s not all work for Call. In his spare time he carves intricate, detailed wood objects, with his pocket knife and wood files.

Twenty-three years ago, he carved a chain for his then fiancée – now wife – with her name dangling from it and hung it from their Christmas tree. He has decided to carry on this tradition by carving one for each of his four children.

Each link takes approximately two hours to craft. The current 21-link chain, for his daughter, is almost complete.

Call’s extracurricular activities prove him to be a highly motivated Soldier. Although Call takes pride in what he does, he stated, “I couldn’t do half of the things I do in the military or civilian life without the unwavering support and devotion from my loving wife.” ✂

Texas based engineers case colors

Story by Sgt. Tracy Knowles

16th Eng. Bde, UPAR

BAGHDAD – In the early morning hours of Dec. 9, the 101st Engineer Battalion bid farewell and thank you, for a job well done, to the Soldiers of the 277th Engineer Company, of San Antonio, Texas, while at the same time, welcoming the 317th Engineer Company of Kankakee, Ill., to Camp Liberty, as the two companies complete the traditional Transfer of Authority ceremony.

Over the presiding week, the 317th Eng. Co. has provided a member of each section to spend time shadowing their 277th Eng. Co., counterpart and absorbing everything that was accomplished over the last year.

An invocation given by Chaplain (Capt.) Paul Barnett, 101st Eng. Bn., of Wareham, Mass., marked the start of the ceremony. The Chaplain prayed for the safe departure of the 277th Eng. Co. and asked for vision, vigilance and victory for the incoming unit.

“Enable and ignite those Soldiers coming and those Soldiers going with courageous commitment, devoted duty, and passionate patriotism as we all move forward,” prayed Barnett.

Lt. Col. Charles Cody, commander, 101st Eng. Bn., followed Chap. Barnett with words of encouragement and honor for the 277th Eng. Co.

“Thank you for your service and sacrifice, you should be proud. You will always be a part of the 101st Eng. Bn.,” said Cody.

In the past year, the 277th Eng. Co. has completed missions such as improving bridge embankments for route accessibility and reinforcing over eight miles of HESCO barriers to improve force protection on Forward Operating Base Hammer.

As new members of the 101st Eng. Bn., the battalion commander welcomed the 317th Eng. Co. into the family.

“You have big shoes to fill and I am sure you will do well,” Cody stated.

The 317th is here to pick up the missions left behind by the 277th, continuing the journey and becoming a new portion of the “Nation’s Oldest” history.

As new unit’s colors were uncased; with the future unwritten, 1st. Lt. Richard Hamilton, of Lake Moor, Ill., the commander of the 317th Eng. Co., spoke words of praise and honor to his troops.

“Do not count the days, make the days count,” said Hamilton.



Photo by Sgt. Tracy Knowles, 16th Eng. Bde. UPAR

Above, Capt. Gordon Robbins, 277th Engineer Company, gives a farewell speech to Soldiers as members of the 317th Engineer Company stand by to take over the mission.



Photo by Sgt. Tracy Knowles, 16th Eng. Bde. UPAR

Acting 1st. Sgt. Alfredo Ramos, of San Antonio, Texas, cases the 227th Engineer Company's colors. The longtime tradition represents the end of a unit's mission.



Photo by Sgt. Tracy Knowles, 16th Eng. Bde. UPAR

Commanders, Capt. Gordon Robbins (left), 277th Engineer Company, and 1st. Lt. Richard Hamilton, 317th Engineer Company, present arms during a Transfer of Authority ceremony on Dec. 9.

OPSEC

"Get ready for the pain... the Pain Train's coming!"

56

"OPSEC... it's all about the mindset, baby..."

"How many times do I have to tell you... You know you can't talk about that on a phone, fool!"

GET WITH THE PROGRAM

... before it gets with you...

OPSEC

The ENEMY is listening

He wants to know what you know

KEEP IT TO YOURSELF

U.S., ISF, students benefit from donations



Photo by Spc. Kelly LeCompte, 30th HBCT PAO, MND-B

Staff Sgt. Dale O'Neill, of the 30th Heavy Brigade Combat Team, stands hand-in-hand with an Iraqi Federal Police officer, cheering with students of al-Alam Elementary School in southern Baghdad, Dec. 9.



Photo by Spc. Kelly LeCompte, 30th HBCT PAO, MND-B

Command Sgt. Maj. John Swart (left), hands out school supplies to students of al-Alam School.



Photo by Spc. Kelly LeCompte, 30th HBCT PAO, MND-B

Working together with Iraqi Security Forces, Staff Sgt. Dale O'Neill carries a box of much needed, donated school supplies into al-Alam Elementary School.

Story By Spc. Kelly LeCompte

30th HBCT PAO, MND-B

BAGHDAD – From renovating a school building to supplying the children with much needed school supplies, U.S. and Iraqi forces have partnered together to send a positive message and strengthen the relationship between the Iraqi Security Forces and the children in the community.

A steady stream of excited shouts, cheers in Arabic, clapping and a few English “thank yous” poured from the courtyard and echoed through the newly renovated building and glossy granite halls of the all male school of al-Alam Elementary, in the western Rashid district of Baghdad, during a visit from U.S. and Iraqi forces, Dec. 9.

Soldiers of the 30th Heavy Brigade Combat Team, Iraqi General Faisal and Command Sgt. Maj. Emjed, both of Iraqi 5th Brigade, 2nd Federal Police Division, along with several Federal Policemen, distributed 600 bags of school supplies.

U.S. and Iraqi Soldiers handed out baggies containing notebooks, pens, pencils, crayons, pencil sharpeners, folders and a small toy, such as a bouncy ball or a pair of sunglasses, to excited school children.

First Lt. Michael Angeli, a civil affairs team chief, coordinated the trip as a culmination of the recent renovation done to the al-Alam school completed by the battalion in September.

The repairs were made just in time for the students to begin the school year in October.

“We were just trying to bring the project full circle, and show continued support to the children,” said Angeli, from Hartshorne, Okla.

“It allows us to leave a smaller footprint. It shows the local populous that the ISF is taking a more active role in supporting the community.”

– First Lt. Michael Angeli



The school supplies came from care packages sent to several Soldiers, the biggest portion from Staff Sgt. Dale O'Neill, from Memphis Tenn. O'Neill's wife led a collection drive at their daughter's elementary school.

“[My wife] collected 35 boxes of supplies from students, parents and teachers, and a good portion of the contribution came from the local Wal-Mart, in Bartlett, too,” O'Neill said. “We separated the boxes into 400 packages.”

Two hundred more packages were put together from supplies from the other Soldiers.

“The supplies were donated from a lot of people back in the States; different organizations, different groups, families, and the chaplain from 252nd, Chaplain Vaughn Benner,” Angeli said. “We just did one big collective school drop.”

Angeli said the combined operation was aimed to help reinforce the community bond between the Iraqi Security Forces and the local citizens, an important step in strengthening the future of Iraq as U.S. forces prepare to leave.

“It allows us to leave a smaller footprint,” Angeli said. “It shows the local populous that the ISF is taking a more active role in supporting the community.”

After all the school supplies had been handed out, the U.S. and Iraqi Soldiers stood together for photos with a group of the school children. The children clapped and cheered, and the rest of the students rushed across the courtyard to join the crowd. An Iraqi Federal Policeman grabbed O'Neill's hand and held it in the air, smiling and cheering with the students.

“It was my best day in Iraq,” O'Neill said.

“I'm glad it went off as such a great success,” Angeli said.



Engineers continue to light the way

Story and photos by Staff Sgt. April Mota

101st Eng. Bn., PAO 16th Eng. Bde, MND-B

BAGHDAD – Over the past few weeks, Soldiers of the 101st Engineer Battalion have been working hard to install rows of lights to illuminate a convoy staging area, here, on Camp Liberty.

The project's main goal is to increase safety for the Soldiers who prepare for night time convoys. A concern had been raised that the convoy staging area was unsafe during hours of low visibility, and with rough terrain including mud, rocks, and holes, the Soldiers' safety was at risk.

"Lt. Col. Charles Cody proposed the idea for the

project," said Maj. Jackson Macomber, of Stoughton, Mass. "He is one hundred percent for the safety of the Soldiers."

Macomber explained how the row of lights would increase visibility on the staging line, allowing the Soldiers to see what they were doing during low visibility convoy operations.

Soldiers from the 1434th Engineer Company, 1192nd Engineer Company, Headquarters Support Company and 621st Engineer Survey and Design Team worked collectively to make this project come together. The 621st Eng. Team designed the plans for the project, the 1192nd Eng. Co. prepared the area for the installation of the poles, and the 1434th Eng. Co. mounted the fixtures and wired the electrical components.

Sgt. Matthew Gately, of Wareham, Mass., routinely prepares in the staging area for night missions.

"The lights make things better for us; we are able to see the terrain which will help us load our vehicles," said Gately, "Safety is always a plus".

Gately went on to explain how in the past, Soldiers have rolled their ankles on the rough terrain of the convoy staging lane due to poor visibility.

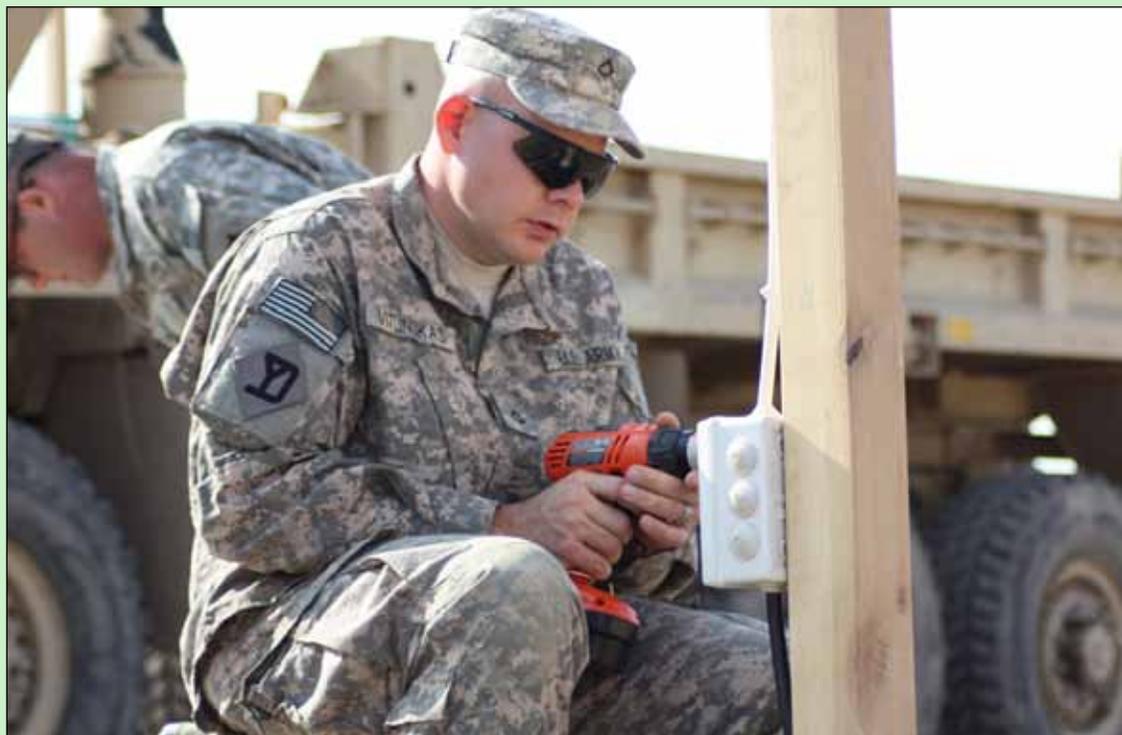
"We used to rely on the vehicles' spot lights and brake lights. With these new lights, we will be safer," said Gately.

The Soldiers of the 101st Eng. Bn. worked as a team to complete this task, essential to Soldier safety. Illumination will make for safer working conditions in the staging area. ✂



Spc. Martin Derek (left), of Hillsdale, Mich., 1434th Engineer Company, 101st Engineer Battalion, attaches a light fixture to a base plate that Spc. Gerald Alexander prepared for installation. (Below right) Soldiers from the 1434th En. Co. work on completing the electrical components of the new light fixtures in the convoy staging area. The lights will increase safety for the Soldiers of the 101st Eng. Bn.

(Above) Spc. Gerald Alexander, of Gladstone, Mich., 1434th Engineer Company, 101st Engineer Battalion, stretches to assemble a lighting fixture on the convoy staging area, Dec. 2. (Below) Pfc. Mark Vitunskas, of Cedar Springs, Mich., 1434th En. Co. uses a drill to attach a cover on an electrical housing box.



Sailor comes ashore for MND-B civil affairs mission

By Staff Sgt. Jeff Hansen

MND-B PAO

BAGHDAD – With the transition in Iraq shifting from a U.S. to an Iraqi led force, becoming a joint-service armed force is more important than ever, and Multi-National Division — Baghdad is no exception.

One example of this meshing between the branches is Petty Officer 3rd Class Colette Culpepper. The Antioch, Calif., native is currently assigned as a movement coordinator with the 414th Civil Affairs Battalion, 1st Cavalry Division, here. She is one of the very few Navy personnel currently assigned to MND-B.

As a systems administrator aboard the aircraft carrier USS Enterprise, Culpepper worked as a trouble-shooter for network computers and communications equipment on board the ship. She received on-the-job training via an intelligence program and says it was an easy switch because of her electronics background.

Culpepper volunteered to support Operation Iraqi Freedom because she wanted to help with the transition of responsibility back to the Iraqis. She stated that she was also eager to get some boots-on-ground time, which she hasn't gotten much of during her four years in the Navy.

As a member of the division's Civil Capacity Cell, Culpepper compiles information gathered by aerial footage and ground intelligence in order to brief staff and unit leaders on how to conduct movement safely throughout the area.

The collection is then briefed to MND-B leadership during a Non-Lethal



Photo by Staff Sgt. Jeff Hansen, MND-B PAO

Petty Officer 3rd Class Colette Culpepper, an Antioch, Calif., native, organizes and prepares for an upcoming Non-Lethal Targeting Bureau, Dec. 8. Culpepper is currently assigned to the 414th Civil Affairs Battalion, 1st Cavalry Division as a movement coordinator and non-lethal targeting assistant.

Targeting Board, where plans are formed and revised based on information received from units. "I enjoy the boards we have here," she stated. "Hearing the generals speak with such passion about what they want to see happen is great."

Culpepper works to ensure the units' movements are conducted in a safe and secure manner. If they can arrive at their

destination and accomplish the mission without enduring any combat, Culpepper said she considers that a successful mission.

Being accustomed to working on a ship, she said seeing Soldiers making face-to-face contact with locals was a learning experience for her.

"I've gotten a whole new respect on

military service and the way things work from land," she said. "I like how the Army is so hands-on with the communities; it's something I'm not used to."

Culpepper says she hopes to continue to be a valuable asset to the civil affairs team. With the various duties thrown on her plate, Culpepper is proving that Sailors, too, can learn to be Army Strong.

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From high school to flight school

Story by Sgt. Travis Zielinski

1st ACB PAO, 1st Cav. Div., Public Affairs

CAMP TAJI, Iraq – The United States Army is one place where a 20-year-old is allowed to fly one of the most advanced helicopters in the world.

Joining the Army as a teenager, Chief Warrant Officer 3 Aaron Fouquette was going to find a way to take advantage of this little know fact.

“I was always fascinated with flying when I was a little kid, so I knew I wanted get into aviation and fly in some shape or form,” said Fouquette, an AH-64D Apache attack helicopter instructor pilot with 4th Battalion, 227th Aviation Regiment, 1st Air Cavalry Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division.

“I grew up on a naval base and my next door neighbor was an Army recruiter,” said the Jacksonville, Fla., native. “He was interested in getting me to join the Army and showed me the high school to flight school program.”

“A lot of people don’t even know about the program,” said Fouquette. “I didn’t know about it either; I always thought that I had to go to college and then go to flight school – if I was lucky enough to get selected to go to flight school.”

The recruiter took the time to set up the warrant officer packet, which includes the interviews, flight physicals and the tests, to get into the Army flight school, he said.

Fouquette was originally assigned to fly the OH-58 Kiowa Warrior helicopter, but after a little persistence he was able to get into the AH-64A Apache attack helicopter training course.

With a combination of being isolated in the crew station, looking through the top of the canopy while flying forward and the instructor’s aggressive flying style – at 20 years old – it became clear that flying an Apache was the right choice, said Fouquette.

“At the time, I had pretty much gotten what I wanted; I had [gotten] into aviation and I was flying one of the most advanced aircraft, at least helicopter-wise, in the world,” said Fouquette. “To be honest, I thought I was pretty good at flying until I got to my first unit.”

In 2003, at 21 years old, and only a couple months out of flight school, Fouquett deployed for the first time. The only responsibilities he had as a front-seat



Photo by Sgt. Travis Zielinski, 1st ACB, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs

Chief Warrant Officer 3 Aaron Fouquette, from Jacksonville, Fla., an AH-64D Apache attack helicopter instructor pilot in 4th Battalion, 227th Aviation Regiment, 1st Air Cavalry Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, conducts systems checks on an Apache before going on mission, here, Dec. 10.

pilot were operating the radios and weapons systems.

But now, at the age of 27, with more than 36 months of combat experience from Operation Iraqi Freedom under his belt, his role has changed and Fouquette is now molding the young aviators into experienced pilots.

“I’m now an instructor pilot, air mission commander [and] mission briefer, and looking at peers that are 21 now, I definitely see a difference in the maturity level,” said Fouquette. “Basically I am in charge of our junior aviators and their upbringing. I guess with responsibility comes maturity.”

“I was going to get out of the military after my second deployment,” said Fouquette. “I just couldn’t do it though; I really enjoy flying this aircraft, being with the people I am currently with and I don’t have

any regrets in anything I’ve done.”

Because of Fouquette’s determination to become an aviator and the Army route he decided to take, the feeling of success came to him at an early age.

“Early on it was interesting to return home and see friends just hanging out or just starting college and figuring out what they wanted to do,” said Fouquette. “I was already set up in a career, moving forward with flight progression and being set up financially. I felt like I was ahead of the program in regards to that.”

“I think I have been rather successful since an early age in doing what I love – and that is flying,” said Fouquette. “Let alone flying a Longbow Apache, which is by far the most advanced helicopter in the world.”



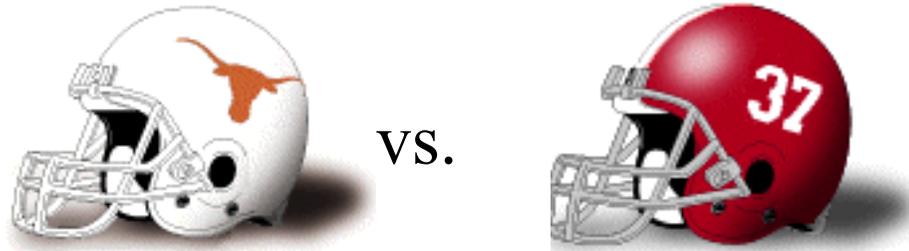
Photo by Sgt. Travis Zielinski, 1st ACB, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs

Spc. Jonathan Moore, from Columbus, Ga., an AH-64D Apache attack helicopter crew chief in 4th Battalion, 227th Aviation Regiment, 1st Air Cavalry Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, stands by to launch Chief Warrant Officer 3 Aaron Fouquette (backseat), from Jacksonville, Fla., and CW2 John Munson (front seat), from Lyons, N.Y., here, Dec. 10.



College Bowl Game Matchups

Dec. 28 - Jan. 7



BCS Championship: Pasadena, Calif. 7 Jan.



GMAC Bowl: Mobile, Ala., 6 Jan.

Orange Bowl: Miami, Fla., 5 Jan.



Fiesta Bowl: Glendale, Ariz., 4 Jan.

Alamo Bowl: San Antonio, Texas, 2 Jan.

Cotton Bowl: Arlington, Texas, 2 Jan.



Sugar Bowl: New Orleans, La. 1 Jan.

Gator Bowl: Jacksonville, Fla., 1 Jan.



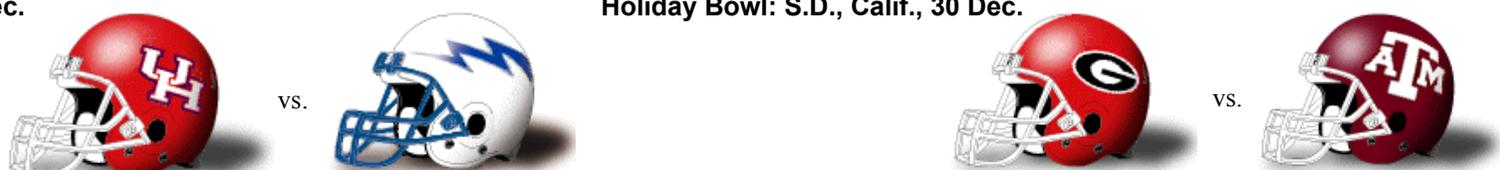
Rose Bowl: Pasadena, Calif. 1 Jan.

Capital One Bowl: Orlando, Fla., 1 Jan.



Texas Bowl: Houston, Texas, 31 Dec.

Holiday Bowl: S.D., Calif., 30 Dec.



Arm. For. Bowl: F.W., Texas, 31 Dec

Indep. Bowl: Shreveport, La., 28 Dec.

Air Cav paralegal changes gears for career

Story by Sgt. Alun Thomas

1st ACB PAO, 1st Cav. Div., Public Affairs

CAMP TAJI, Iraq – Trading the relative comfort of a desk job for the frontlines of war isn't the usual path for Soldiers not weaned on the infantry lifestyle.

Some Soldiers, however, feel they were born for it.

For Spc. Timothy Edmonds, from Elmwood, Tenn., a paralegal specialist with 1st Air Cavalry Brigade, becoming an infantryman has always been his Army goal and he took the final step in realizing it when he reenlisted for the infantry, Dec. 9, here.

But it was a goal Edmonds had to be patient to finally achieve.

Edmonds, 22, joined the Army in 2007, but was unable to sign up as an infantryman due to color blindness.

"I was still determined to be in the Army somewhere and combat medic is close to the infantry so I chose that instead," Edmonds said. "But infantry was always my goal; I wanted to be in the fight."

Edmonds was prevented from becoming a medic at the last hurdle, and he switched his military occupational specialty.

"I made it through all the training, right up until the last three days and when I got my test results back from the National Registry Exam for [emergency medical technician] basic, I had failed the test," Edmonds said.

Following this setback, Edmonds was told he had to re-class to the legal field, leaving his dreams of joining the infantry further behind.

"I didn't really have a choice ... I was

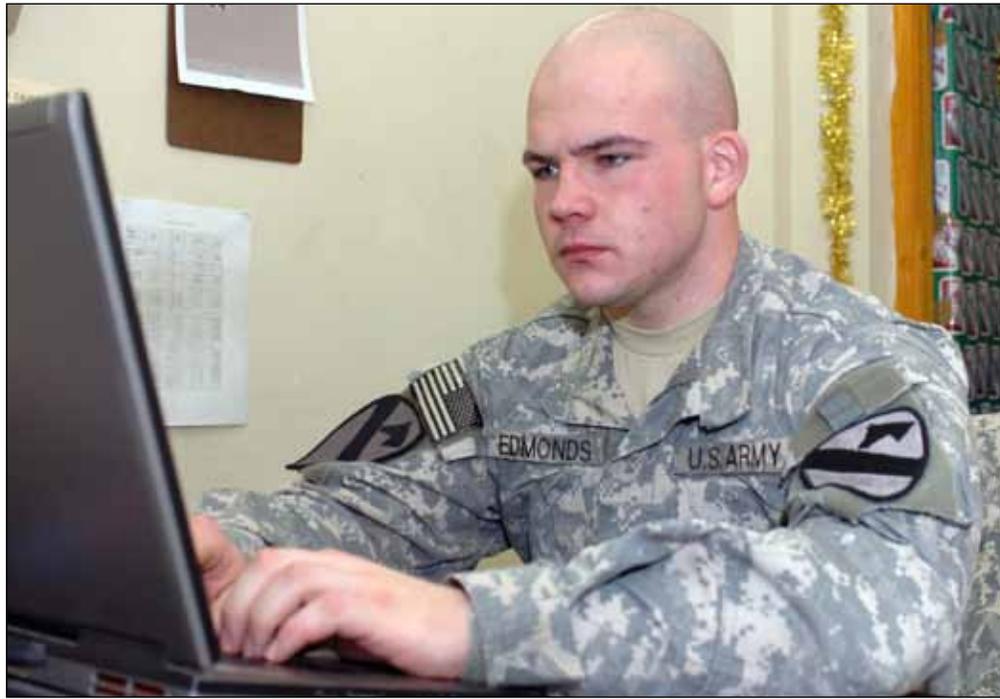


photo by Sgt. Alun Thomas, 1st ACB, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs

Spc. Timothy Edmonds, from Elmwood, Tenn., a paralegal specialist with the 1st Air Cavalry Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, works on a case in the brigade legal office. Becoming an Infantryman has been a life-long goal, which he recently achieved.

[subject] to the needs of the Army," he said.

Edmonds was assigned to the 1st ACB as his first duty station, but soon found sitting in an office far from ideal.

"I'm not in my element when I'm behind a desk all day," Edmonds said. "I'm more of an outside kind of guy, being on my feet. I like change."

When Edmonds left with the 1st ACB on their current deployment, he said being an infantryman was still uppermost in his thoughts.

Luckily an opportunity soon presented itself.

"The requirements changed from what they were when I first joined," Edmonds said,

his color blindness no longer a barrier to the infantry. "when they removed that, I figured I could try again."

The next step was to reenlist and obtain his desired career field.

"I told [retention] what I wanted and how much I wanted it," he continued.

Edmonds secured a four-year reenlistment and said it was a proud moment reenlisting, knowing he is about to embark on his true calling.

"It felt a lot different than when I first enlisted. I had a bigger rush knowing I was getting what I wanted to do," Edmonds said with a smile.

But the challenge of his infantry training and the possibility of fighting on the frontlines loom for Edmonds, who plans to exert himself to achieve excellence in the field.

"If I like it the way I think I will, I believe I'll go far ... I'm going to be in the Army for a while," he continued. "It takes a certain kind of person to do it and I think I have the attributes to be successful in this field."

The reality of combat doesn't concern Edmonds, who said the training he expects to get will serve him well.

"I hope when that time comes, the moment of truth, I'll rely on my training to take over," he said. "I just hope I can do what I'm trained to do and make my family proud."

The less than glamorous life of an infantryman also suits Edmonds, who said he wants to be in the thick of the action defending his nation.

"I appreciate what I have back home ... I grew up on a farm and it's beautiful country and I couldn't imagine the stuff going on out here spilling over to where I grew up," Edmonds said. "I don't want them to see that, so that's why I'm doing my part in taking care of business and getting things done."

Now Edmonds path is set in stone, he said it's a decision he's sure he will not regret.

"We live with our decisions and we learn to adjust and adapt, just like when I became a paralegal," he explained. "I'm anticipating getting some good training and doing what I'm trained to do." ✂

IRON CASTLE

Soldier draws on experience to help interpreters

Story by Sgt. Tracy Knowles

16th Eng Bde., UPAR

BAGHDAD – Charismatic, artistic, charming, tough, and an angel; there is no single word to describe the unique character of Staff Sgt. Ronald Leger of New Bedford, Mass.

Leger joined the Army National Guard in 1974. As a new member of the 26th Yankee Division, he continued the tradition of his forefathers. Leger's great-grandfather, grandfather, and father all served during the World Wars. Leger joined because he wanted to understand why they were willing to sacrifice their lives for their country. He realized it was to safeguard freedom.

While serving in Korea with the 2nd Infantry Division, Leger noticed the children and the overall poverty of the country and wanted to help the local people. Leger wasn't in a position to do this, until many years later.

In 2006, while deployed with NATO troops to Pristina, Kosovo, Leger had an opportunity of a lifetime to make a difference for Kosovo's children of war. When asked to volunteer his time at a children's center in downtown Pristina, Leger jumped at the opportunity to help. His chance to make a difference had arrived.

"This opportunity started one of the greatest experiences of my life," said Leger, a father of two daughters.

"Seeing the smiles on their faces and the tears in their eyes, will never be wiped from my memory."

– Staff Sgt. Ronald Leger

After meeting the 150 women and children who had lost their husbands, fathers and brothers in the Serbia and Kosovo conflicts, Leger helped coordinate basic necessities such as the delivery of water and electricity.

"The joy on the faces of these broken families was payment enough for helping," stated Leger.

As desire to help grew, NATO Soldiers from around the world participated in the center's very first Christmas Angel Tree to help those less fortunate. The Soldiers sponsored children for the holidays by choosing an angel ornament with a child's name on it.

Leger and a team of Santa Soldiers not only gave the children toys, but also donated coats, hats and mittens. Most of these items were donated from Soldiers' families at home. Leger was floating on cloud nine when he saw

that Soldiers like him; were willing to lend a helping hand.

"Seeing the smiles on their faces and the tears in their eyes, will never be wiped from my memory," said Leger.

Leger was instrumental in planning a version of Woodstock that took place in Kosovo in 2007. Leger, a connoisseur of blues music, used the idea of a music festival as a fundraiser to increase support for a children's center.

The event was a great success, hosting seven local bands and providing enough food for 3,000 people. Between t-shirt sales and donations, Leger and the volunteers helped raise enough money to help the children's center for over a year. This event also started a Woodstock Foundation that continues to raise money for future support.

"Cost of Woodstock: €4000 euro. Cost of getting Woodstock off the ground, sweat and tears, being called an angel by the children of Kosovo: priceless," said Leger.

For Leger's last leg of his military career, he is currently deployed to Baghdad, Iraq, as the non-commissioned officer in charge of the 101st Engineer Battalion's six interpreters.

Once again Leger's kind heart has allowed him to be in a position that allows him to help. His responsibilities include making sure the interpreters have everything they need: food, clothing, housing and personal safety.

Truly honored to serve his country and make a difference in so many lives, Leger hopes to retire right where he began, with the 26th Yankee Division. ✂

U.S., ISF unite to secure polling sites



Photo by Georges Aboumrاد, 2nd BCT PAO, 10th Mtn. Div.

Staff Sgt. William Turner, of Lynchburg, Va., provides security in New Baghdad, Dec. 7, where American and Iraqi forces are placing concrete barriers to secure polling sites during the upcoming elections.

Story By Sgt. Jennie Burrett
2nd BCT PAO, 10th Mtn. Div.

BAGHDAD – As the Iraqi elections draw closer, U.S. and Iraqi forces are focusing on providing security for citizens and polling stations, here, in the capital.

Soldiers of the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division converged with Iraqi Federal Police to move concrete barriers and cement blocks for increased security measures during the upcoming election at polling sites in the New Baghdad district, Dec. 7.

Although movement within the city is restricted for U.S. forces under the current Security Agreement, they are still able to provide assistance through partnership with the Iraqi forces.

“Everything we do on a daily basis is partnered with the Iraqis, with the Iraqis in the lead,” said Capt. Tad Granai, of Providence, R.I. “It’s been a great working relationship with incredible improvement that’s taken place in a very, very

short amount of time. We’ll continue this partnership until we leave.”

Iraqi FP Col. Alwan Shakir, appreciated what the Americans are doing in support of the people of Iraq.

“I thank our friendly forces for the great support that they are providing to [the people of Iraq],” said Shakir.

Supporting the Iraqi government and helping the Iraqi people are the main concerns of the 2nd BCT Soldiers currently serving in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

“We are really excited we get to help the Iraqi government by making sure the elections go well,” said 1st Lt. Robert Makuch, of Scottsville, N.Y. “We are here to support the Iraqi Army and the Iraqi Police by making sure these elections go safely. Our main concern is keeping the Iraqi voters safe so that they feel safe enough to go out and vote and have a good turnout for the elections.”

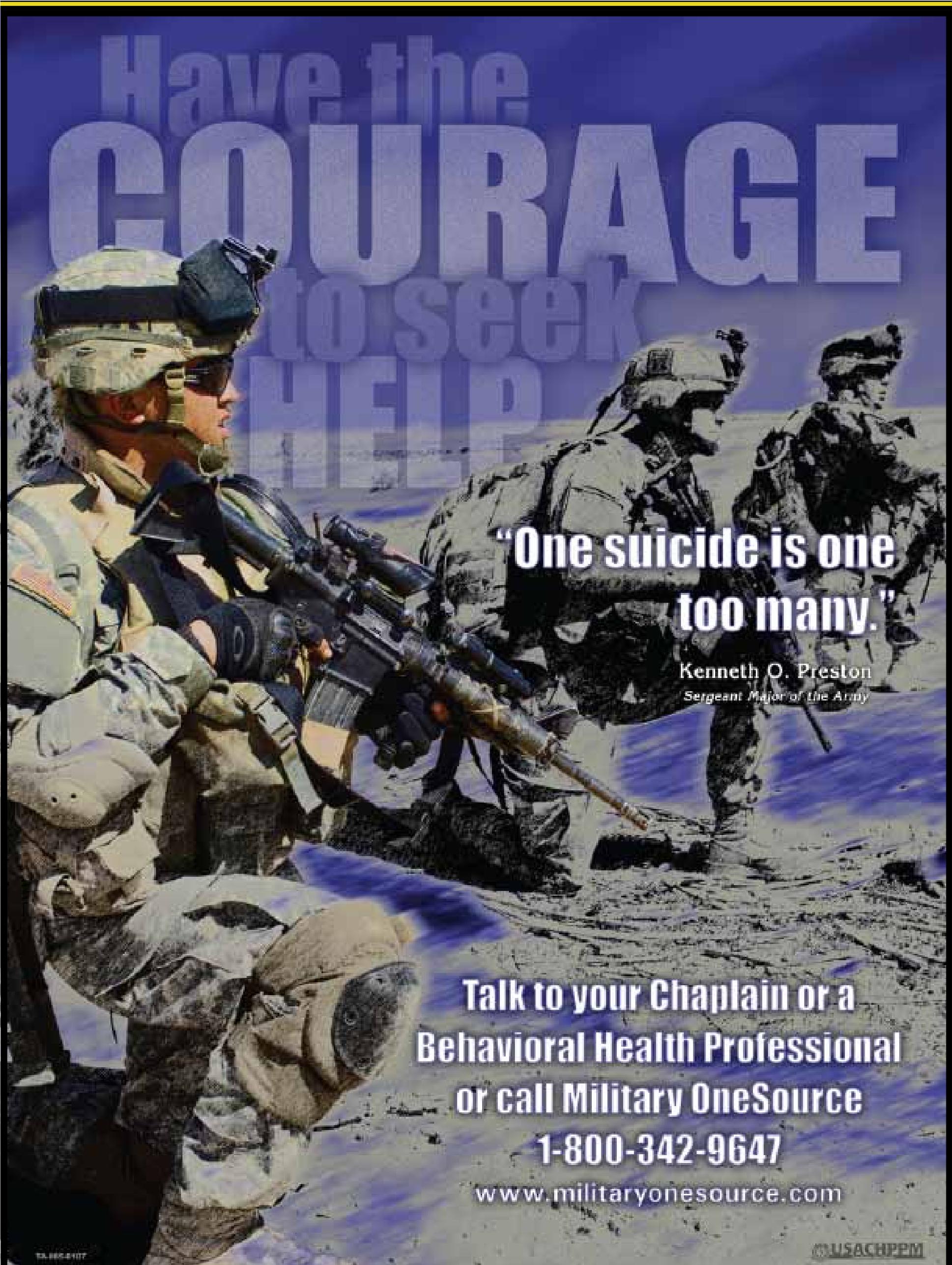
The combined partnership preparation will continue for the upcoming elections in the beginning of 2010. ✂



Photo by Georges Aboumrاد, 2nd BCT PAO, 10th Mtn. Div.

Pfc. William Chrisman, of Merritt Island, Fla., operates a forklift loading barriers, in preparation for a combined operation with Iraqi forces, Dec. 7, to put barriers for security around the New Baghdad polling sites, for the upcoming elections.

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Kenneth O. Preston
Sergeant Major of the Army

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Sabers, cigars and ammo, oh my!

Story by Sgt. Samantha Beuterbaugh
MND-B, PAO

BAGHDAD – As the 1st Cavalry Division's customs program manager, Sgt. 1st Class Travis Huggard, a Spangle, Wash. native, sees a lot of forbidden items as Soldiers go through customs inspections.

Huggard's job is to monitor, supervise and provide quality control management to the Brigade Combat Teams; each one assigned 30 to 40 customs border clearance agents.

These agents conduct hands-on searches to inspect, both visually and physically, every item which Soldiers attempt to transport back to the states. If the BCT agents find anything they are unsure of or have questions, they contact Huggard directly.

The little things are what seem to be stumping the Soldiers, and Huggard wants to ensure Soldiers understand what they can and cannot take through customs, so they don't lose personal items. Many prohibited items are either new or have been amended, he said.

"A lot of changes have come down lately, and we can't publish fast enough," said Huggard.

"Overall, Soldiers are doing a good job getting things cleared properly, and the chain of command is doing a good job conducting pre-inspections," said Huggard.

Though Soldiers seem to be doing well with pre-inspections, questions about customs will continue to arise

because the requirements are always changing. Standing in front of a customs inspector in Kuwait is not the time to ask questions.

If there are questions about things, units need to ask their BCT agents or get in touch with the Provost Marshal Office before they get to the inspection site in order to avoid delays.

"We look at the intent," said Huggard. "If it's well-hidden," he added, "it's a major violation and the world stops turning. UCMJ action will be taken."

The goal is to make sure everything is conducted smoothly and Soldiers get out in the least amount of time, Huggard said.

Soldiers are well informed, so fewer mistakes are being made, said Huggard. But always remember, the most important thing to do with an item in question is to ask, before it becomes an issue. The standards don't change from here to Kuwait.

Huggard said he is looking forward to his not-so-distant trip home to his wife and four children, in which he, too, will face the scrutiny of customs inspectors. ✂



Photo by Sgt. Samantha Beuterbaugh, MND-B PAO

Above, Sgt. 1st Class Travis Huggard, the customs program manager for the 1st Cavalry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad Provost Marshal's Office displays a prescription pill bottle that was discovered inside of a Soldier's footlocker that was being inspected for shipment home. Prescription pill bottles must be hand-carried onto the plane if you want to ensure they make it to their destination. They are not allowed to be mailed or shipped.



Photo by Sgt. Samantha Beuterbaugh, MND-B PAO

Sgt. David Shirley (left), a customs border clearance agent for the 150th Armored Reconnaissance Squadron, 30th Heavy Brigade Combat Team, inspects the contents of a footlocker, Dec. 11, for prohibited items, to ensure the Soldiers return home safely.

INFORMATION CUSTOMS AGENTS WANT YOU TO KNOW

- You are only allowed to transport one of a specific type of pirated item every 30 days, i.e. one DVD, one watch, one purse, etc. This is not a DVD policy mandated by MND-B. It is a policy that U.S. Customs and Border Protection agents are required to enforce that has been in place for the last seven years. Understand this previous misconception; it's not a new policy.
- Placing a SECRET sticker on your electronic device is NOT funny. That is until your buddy falls to the floor laughing when the item is confiscated by customs and handed over to the Military Police. You won't get it back. Do your bank account a favor: don't place a sticker that reads "US Government Property" on anything you don't want confiscated.
- The commander's memo for spring-loaded knives is no longer necessary, as long as the knife is an issued type, i.e. universal multi-tool. One or two is fine, but if you try to pack an entire box of knives, you will be questioned and the knives may be confiscated. All knives must be in your CHECKED BAGGAGE.
- Swords, sabers and knives native to Iraq are permitted, but they must be sheathed and in CHECKED BAGGAGE.
- Absolutely no butane or Zippo lighters are allowed into the cabin of the airplane.
- Each brigade is authorized one gifted weapon or an historical item. War trophies require paperwork. Prior to arriving for your inspection, ensure that any gifted weapon has been properly demilitarized and that all of the proper paperwork is filled out completely.
- If you obtain any classified information and are planning on transporting it back to the United States, you will need to have courier orders. Courier orders must be current and valid. "IN THEATER ONLY" means the orders are for use in theater, which means movement within Iraq, not movement from Iraq to the United States.
- Aerosol cans (i.e. shaving cream, body spray, spray deodorant) are only allowed to be transported in CHECKED BAGGAGE.
- One carton of cigarettes or 100 cigars is the limit. Only cigars from non-embargoed countries will make it through customs. If you remove the labels from the cigars, they will be confiscated.
- Brass and ammo are not permitted, regardless of what form they are in. Sift through the compartments of your IBA or IOTV, especially in the pouches where the E-SAPI plates are inserted.
- No dirt or untreated wood is permitted for transport. Be sure to scrub boot bottoms before inspection.
- No pornography is allowed to be transported. It will be confiscated.
- Prescription pill bottles are not allowed to be shipped – they must be carried on your person.

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